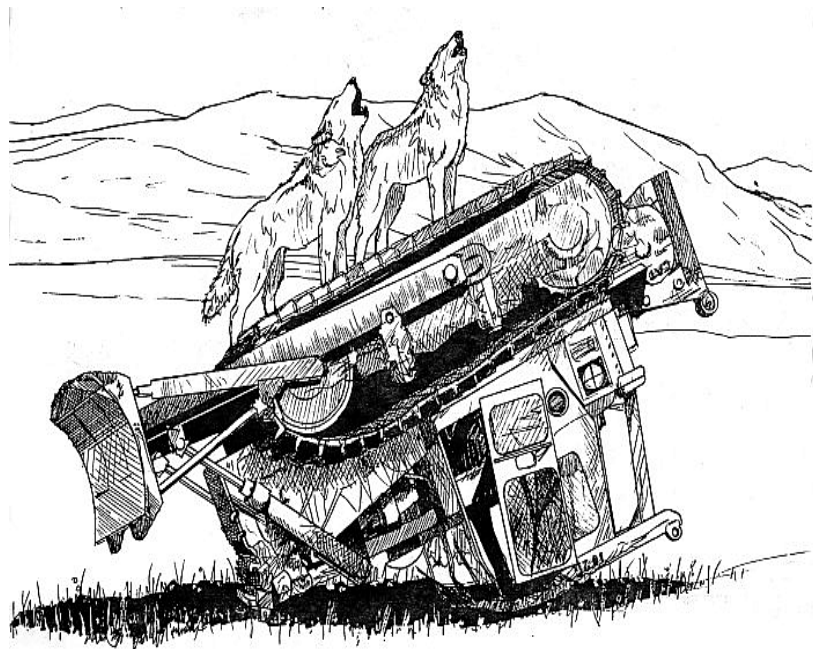


Derrick Jensen on Pacifism and Violence

Excerpts from *Endgame Volumes 1 & 2*

transcribed and arranged by Usul of the Blackfoot



Introduction

Endgame is a pretty epic read. It's damn near 900 larger-than-standard pages of critical theory involving the nature of civilization, oppression, psychopathology, abuse, sexism, racism, imperialism, ecocide, and idiocy. Heavy shit, not to be taken lightly.

The breadth and scope of this work are amazing, and potential readers- whether they welcome the fall of Western civilization or see it as an ominous inevitability- will most certainly benefit from reading it in whole. I sure as hell did. But, unless you're a superhuman speed-freak, it's definitely not an afternoon's endeavor; this book takes a while to read.

Many readers might be deterred by the length and weightiness of Jensen's two volumes. Others might be turned off by what they perceive as flaws or hypocrisies in the man himself. Whatever one's reasons for avoiding the bulk of *Endgame*, I highly recommend everyone go acquire a copy and devote the time necessary to read it all.

Contained herein is but a sampling of *Endgame*. All of the following chapters come from the second volume, entitled *Resistance*. As the title of this zine suggests, these chapters mainly revolve around Jensen's thoughts- meditations, analyses, quips, and sad truths- about dogmatic pacifism and violence. Like many other activists, I've been subjected to (read: assaulted with) the same old bullshit pacifist propaganda that so many radicals grow weary of. I, like Derrick Jensen, feel that defensive or counter-violence is a badly needed, necessary, effective tactic that's absent in the modern radical movement, and that because of the biases and dogma of insistent pacifists, there isn't even dialogue on when violence is and is not an appropriate tactic. It is for these reasons I decided to compile this zine.

In each of the four chapters following below, Jensen visits the hackneyed arguments and convenient slogans of pacifists and tears them apart, each in its own time. He also examines the use of violence by indigenous people, women, and other marginalized and repressed groups as an effective tactic in avoiding oppression,

abuse, brutality, and murder at the hands of the world's many tyrants.

Included alongside Jensen's reflections on pacifism are two other chapters from volume two of *Endgame*. The first is a dialogue in which Jensen discusses electronic hacking and the ease with which the current dominant culture might be toppled (or at least weakened) by illegal electronic means. The second chapter deals with military strategy, guerrilla warfare, and the efficacy of properly applied violence, even in the face of a death machine as vast and seemingly unstoppable as modern Western civilization. These chapters have been included in hopes of encouraging those who recognize violence as a perfectly legitimate tactic to take action and to recognize these actions are not without positive results.

Before continuing on to the chapters from *Endgame*, I want to point out that my intent in republishing this work is not to promote primitivism- or the idea that civilization should be done away with *in order to return to a pre-civilized existence*- as Jensen does. I agree with Derrick Jensen that civilization should collapse (and will, history shows us, regardless of our opinions on the matter). But I differ with Jensen in pursuing a wholly primitive existence in the world after civilization has run its terrible course. Instead, I promote a post-civilized approach to society, that is, a society that incorporates the good and does away with the bad elements of both primitive and civilized forms of social organization. For more on the idea of Post-Civilized Anarchism, visit Strangers in a Tangled Wilderness at tangledwilderness.org for free zines by myself and friends on the topic of post-civilization.

My point in bringing this up is not to promote my own work. I mention that I'm not publishing this to push primitivism because these tactics- these ideas- can be used across the spectrum of anti-bad-shit politics. I am a green anarchist, but I realize the importance of traditional "red" anarchists continuing to unionize, organize, and act. And of course I respect and wish to encourage all people who are fighting oppression, whether they be anarchists, socialists, feminists, or simply folks without a political analysis who fight oppression because they bear the full force of oppression

every day. Violence is not the exclusive domain of the master, just using violent tactics should not be the exclusive domain of those (myself included) fighting to bring down civilization. All people fighting the many-headed Hydra that is oppression should consider the efficacy of and have access to these tactics.

It should be noted, finally, that in the following text I have taken the (*very* liberal) liberty of changing the word "Indian" to "Native American." I have done so because I am largely a native or North America, both in my blood and in the way I live, and I find Jensen's use of "Indian" careless and silly, just as I would find careless and silly the use of the words "chick" or "girl" each time he used women in his examples. This is semantics, to be sure, but I find the term "Indian" personally offensive and don't wish to perpetuate its use. If you wish to read the text free of my Bowdlerizing, substitute "Indian" wherever "Native American" occurs.

Please feel free to redistribute this zine, but understand that I haven't contacted the author for permission, so in so doing you'll be committing a crime, *gasp!* Any comments, suggestions, or angry pacifist rants can be sent to usuloftheblackfoot@gmail.com. Please enjoy, stay safe, and be responsible.

- Usul of the Blackfoot

Pacifism, Part I

The people in power will not disappear voluntarily; giving flowers to cops just isn't going to work. This thinking is fostered by the establishment; they like nothing better than love and nonviolence. The only way I like to see cops given flowers is in a flower pot from a high window.

- William S. Burroughs

Here are some standard lines thrown out by pacifists. I'm sure you, too, have heard them enough that if we had a bouncing red ball we could all sing along. Love leads to pacifism, and any use of violence implies a failure to love. You can't use the master's tools to dismantle the master's house. It's far easier to make war than to make peace. We must visualize world peace. To even talk about winning and losing (much less to talk about violence, much, much less to actually do it) perpetuates the destructive dominator mindset that is killing the planet. If we just visualize world peace enough, we may find it, because, as Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller tells us, "Peace is rarely denied to the peaceful." Ends never justify means, which leads to Erasmus saying, and pacifists quoting, "The most disadvantageous peace is better than the most just war." Gandhi gives us some absolutism, as well as absolutism for our inability to stop oppressors, when he says, "Mankind has to get out of violence only through nonviolence. Hatred can be overcome only by love." Gandhi again, with more magical thinking, "When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won. There have been tyrants and murderers and for a time they seem invincible but in the end, they always fall—think of it, ALWAYS. Violence only begets violence. Gandhi again, "We must be the change we wish to see." If you use violence against exploiters, you become like they are. Related to that is the notion that violence destroys your soul. If violence is used, the mass media will distort our message. Every act of violence sets back the movement ten years. If we commit an act of violence, the state will come down hard on us. Because the state has more capacity to inflict violence than we do, we can never win using that tactic, and so must never use it. And finally, violence never accomplishes anything.

Let's take these one by one. Love leads to pacifism and any use of violence implies a failure to love. If we love we cannot ever consider violence, even to protect those we love. Well, we dealt with this several hundred pages ago, and I'm not sure that mother grizzly bears would agree that love implies pacifism, nor mother moose, nor many other mothers I've known.

You can't use the master's tools to dismantle the master's house. I can't tell you how many people have said this to me. I can, however, tell you with reasonable certainty that none of these people have ever read the essay from which the line comes: "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," by Audre Lorde (certainly no pacifist herself). The essay has nothing to do with pacifism, but with the exclusion of marginalized voices from discourse ostensibly having to do with social change. If any of these pacifists had read her essay, they would undoubtedly have been horrified, because she is, reasonably enough, suggesting a multivariied approach to the multivarious problems we face. She says, As women, we have been taught either to ignore our differences, or to view them as causes for separation and suspicion rather than as forces for change. Without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression. But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist." We can say the same for unarmed versus armed resistance, that activists have been taught to view our differences as causes for separation and suspicion, rather than as forces for change. That's a fatal error. She continues, " [Survival] is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. *For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.*"

It has always seemed clear to me that violent and nonviolent approaches to social change are complementary. No one I know who advocates the possibility of armed resistance to the dominant culture's degradation and exploitation rejects nonviolent resistance. Many of use routinely participate in nonviolent resistance and support those for whom this is their only mode of opposition. Just last night I and two other non-pacifists wasted two hours sitting at

a county fair tabling for a local environmental organization and watching the- how do I say this politely?- supersized passersby wearing too-small Bush/Cheney 2004 T-shirts and carrying chocolate-covered bananas. We received many scowls. We did this nonviolent work, although we accomplished precisely nothing. But many dogmatic pacifists refuse to grant the same respect the other way. It is not an exaggeration to say that many of the dogmatic pacifists I've encountered have been fundamentalists, perceiving violence as a form of blasphemy (which it is within this culture if it flows up the hierarchy, and these particular fundamentalists have never been too picky about reaping the fiscal fruits of this culture's routine violence down the hierarchy), and refusing to allow any mention of violence in their presence. It's ironic, then, that they end up turning Audre Lorde's comment on its head.

Our survival really does depend on us learning how to "take our differences"- including violent and nonviolent approaches to stopping civilization from killing the planet- "and make them strengths." Yet these fundamentalists attempt to eradicate this difference, to disallow it, to force all discourse and all action into only one path: theirs. That's incredibly harmful, and of course serves those in power. The master's house will never be dismantled using only one tool, whether that tool is discourse, hammers, or high explosives.

I have many other problems with the pacifist use of the idea that force is solely the dominion of those in power. It's certainly true that the master uses the tool of violence, but that doesn't mean he owns it. Those in power have effectively convinced us they own land, which is to say they convinced us to give up our inalienable right to access our own landbases. They've effectively convinced us they own conflict resolution methods (which they call *laws*) which is to say they've convinced us to give up our inalienable right to resolve our own conflicts (which they call *taking the law into your own hands*). They've convinced us they own water. They've convinced us they own the wild (the government could not offer "timber sales" unless we all agreed it owned the trees in the first place). They're in the process of convincing us they own the air. The state has for millennia been trying to convince us it owns a

monopoly on violence, and abusers have been trying to convince us for far longer than that. Pacifists are more than willing to grant them that, and to shout down anyone who disagrees

Well, I disagree. Violence does not belong exclusively to those at the top of the hierarchy, no matter how much abusers and their allies try to convince us. They have never convinced wild animals, including wild humans, and they will never convince me.

And who is it who says we should not use the master's tools? Often it is Christians, Buddhists, or other adherents of civilized religions. It is routinely people who wish us to vote our way to justice or shop our way to sustainability. But civilized religions are tools used by the master as surely as is violence. So is voting. So is shopping. If we cannot use tools used by the master, what tools, precisely, can we use? How about writing? No, sorry. As I cited in Stanley Diamond much earlier, writing has long been a tool of the master. So I guess we can't use that. Well how about discourse in general? Yes, those in power own the means of industrial discourse production, and those in power misuse discourse. Does that mean they own all discourse- all discourse is one of the master's tools- and we can never use it? Of course not. They also own the means of all industrial religion production, and they misuse religion. Does that mean they own all religion- all religion is one of the master's tools- and we can never use it? Of course not. They own the means of all industrial violence production, and they misuse violence. Does that mean they own all violence- all violence is one of the master's tools- and we can never use it? Of course not.

But I have yet another problem with the statement that the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house, which is that it's a terrible metaphor. It just doesn't work. The first and most necessary condition for a metaphor is that it make sense in the real world. This doesn't.

You can use a hammer to build a house, and you can use a hammer to take it down.

It doesn't matter whose hammer it is.

I'm guessing that Audre Lorde, for all of her wonderful capabilities as a writer, thinker, activist, and human being never in her entire life dismantled a house. Had she done that, she could never have made up this metaphor, because you sure as hell can use the master's tools to dismantle his house. And you can use the master's high explosives to dismantle the master's dam.

* * *

There's an even bigger problem with this metaphor. What is perhaps its most fundamental premise? That the house belongs to the master. But there is no master, and there is no master's house. There are no master's tools. There is a person who believes himself a master. There is a house he claims is his. There are tools he claims as well. And there are those who still believe he is the master.

But there are many others who do not buy into this delusion. There are those of us who see a man, a house, and tools. No more and no less.

* * *

Those in power are responsible for their choices, and I am responsible for mine. But I need to emphasize that I'm not responsible for the way my choices have been framed. If someone puts a gun to my head and gives me the choice of taking a bullet to the brain now or watching twelve straight hours of Dennis Miller, I don't think I could be held entirely responsible for taking the easy way out and telling the person to pull the trigger.

That's a joke (sort of), but the point is a serious one. I want to be clear: I am responsible for the choices I make. I am also responsible for attempting to break the confines which narrowly limit my choices, whenever and wherever possible.

* * *

The next argument I've often heard for pacifism is that it's much easier to make war than to make peace. I have to admit that the first ten or fifteen times I heard this I didn't understand it at all:

whether war or peace is harder is irrelevant. It's easier to catch a fly with your bare hand than with your mouth, but does that mean it's somehow better or more moral to do the latter? It's easier to take out a dam with a sledgehammer than a toothpick, but doing the latter wouldn't make me a better person. An action's difficulty is entirely independent of its quality or morality.

The next ten or fifteen times I heard this phrase, it seemed to be an argument for violent resistance. If I want to live in a world with wild salmon, and if I'm all for doing this the easiest way possible, they're telling me I should make war. Certainly we have enough difficulties ahead of us in stopping those who are killing the planet without adding difficulties just for the hell of it.

The next ten or fifteen times I heard it I started going all psychotherapeutic on those who said it, wondering what it is about these pacifists that causes them to believe struggle for struggle's sake is good. Sounds like a martyr complex to me. Or maybe misplaced Calvinism. I don't know.

But after I heard it another ten or fifteen times, I decided I just don't care. The argument is nonsensical, and I don't want to waste time on it that I could put to better use, like working to bring down civilization.

If all they're saying, by the way, is that oftentimes creativity can make violence unnecessary, I wish they would just say that. I would have no problem with that, so long as we emphasize the word *oftentimes*.

* * *

It's tricky, though. Not many people take responsibility for their actions. Instead of recognizing that the framing conditions constrain their opinions and choosing from their, many instead *blame* the framing conditions for their choices. To take a patriarchal cliché of an unhappy family the miserable husband does not choose to have an affair, but is forced to by his wife's recalcitrance about sex: *I don't want to leave the marriage, nor do I want to lead a sexless life, so what am I going to do?* The miserable

wife does not choose to live a sexless life, but is forced to by her husband's unwillingness or inability to communicate on any but a physical level: *I do not want to leave the marriage, nor do I want sex without intimacy, so what am I going to do?*

Similarly, I've never heard of an abuser saying, "I hit you because I wanted to terrorize you into submission." Instead he might say, "I wouldn't have hit you if you wouldn't have kept yelling and yelling at me about coming in so late." The framing conditions caused his violence. If we move this to a larger scale, how often have we heard politicians speak of the necessity of preemptive attacks on other countries (which just happen to sit atop coveted resources)? They rarely say, "I choose to invade this country." Instead they say they've been forced into this regrettable action by those they are about to subjugate, er, liberate. The Nazis played this same card- *everybody* plays this same card- they only invaded Poland because they had no choice; they only invaded the Soviet Union because they had no choice; they only killed *untermenschen* because they had no choice. Sigh. It's a terribly dirty job, but somebody's got to do it.

CEOs follow the same logic. If it were up to them, they would keep factories open (not that this is a good thing from the perspective of the planet, but within the confines of this culture most people consider it good), pay workers livable wages, maintain solid retirement programs, and so on. But you know how things are. They have no choice but to lay off workers and move the factories to Bangladesh, where they have no choice but to pay Bangladeshis eight cents per hour (as they themselves pull down a cool million per year, which converts to about five hundred dollars per hour, or more in one minute than they pay a Bangladeshi for a hundred hours). And if the Bangladeshis complain, the CEOs will have no choice but to move the factory on to Vietnam. Market pressures, you know. And these same market pressures force them to pollute, to clearcut, to overfish.

I'm sorry, each and every one of us can say, we have no choice but to destroy the planet. It's really not our fault.

Bullshit.

We may as well acknowledge that our entire culture- from top to bottom, inside out, personally and socially- is founded on, motivated by, and requires a systematic and absolute avoidance of responsibility. This is true both of our actions and our failures to act. What, ultimately, is environmental degradation? Any and all environmental degradation is a manifestation and consequence of avoidance of responsibility. \What is pollution? It is a manifestation and consequence of avoidance of responsibility. What is overfishing? Deforestation? They are manifestations and consequences of avoidance of responsibility.

And what is our failure to stop each of these things? It's just as much an avoidance of responsibility.

* * *

We must, we are told, visualize world peace. My first thought on hearing this is always that the abused spouse is so often told that is she can just love her husband enough, he might change. Meanwhile, her daughter may very well be wishing she gets a pony for Christmas, but that isn't going to happen either. My second thought on hearing this is always that visualizing world peace is essentially the semi-secular new age equivalent of praying.

All that said, I have to admit that I actually *am* a huge fan of visualization. I just normally call it daydreaming. When I was a high jumper in college, I used to more or less constantly picture myself floating over the bar. I'd do this in the shower, driving, walking to classes, certainly through all my classes. Later when I coached high jumping, I used to guide my students through visualizations as a routine part of our practice. Now I constantly daydream about my writing. And more importantly I visualize people fighting back. I visualize people knocking down dams. I visualize them taking down the oil and electrical infrastructures. I visualize wild salmon returning in greater numbers every year. I visualize migratory songbirds coming back. I even visualize passenger pigeons returning. So I guess I don't have a problem with people visualizing world peace, so long as people are also working for it. Except that as I made clear early on, civilization requires the importation of

resources, which means it requires the use of force to maintain itself. This means that if these folks who are visualizing world peace really are interested in actualizing world peace, they should also be visualizing industrial collapse. And bringing it about.

But I don't think most people with "Visualize World Peace" bumper stickers on their old Saabs are interested in doing the work to take down civilization. It's too messy. I keep thinking about the line by Gandhi, "We want freedom for our country, but not at the expense or exploitation of others." I've also had this line crammed down my throat more times than I want to consider- often phrased as "You keep saying that in this struggle for the planet that you want to win, but if someone wins, doesn't that mean someone has to lose, and isn't that just perpetuating the same old dominator mindset?- and I've always found it both intellectually dishonest and poorly thought out.

A man tries to rape a woman. She runs away. Her freedom from being raped just came at his expense: he wasn't able to rape her. Does this mean she exploited him? Of course not. Now let's do it again. He tries to rape her. She can't get away. She tries to stop him nonviolently. It doesn't work. She pulls a gun and shoots him in the head. Did she exploit him? Of course not. It all comes back to what I wrote earlier in this book : defensive rights *always* trump offensive rights. My right to freedom always trumps your right to exploit me, and if you do try to exploit me, I have the right to stop you, even at some expense to you.

All of this leads to fuzzy thinking. Anybody's freedom from being exploited will *always* come at the oppressor's ability to exploit. The freedom of salmon (and rivers) to survive will come at the expense of those who profit from dams. The freedom of ancient redwood forests to survive will come at the expense of Charles Hurwitz's bank account. The freedom of the world to survive global warming will come at the expense of those whose lifestyles are based on the burning of oil. It is magical thinking to pretend otherwise.

* * *

Every choice carries with it costs. If you want air conditioning, you

(and many others) are going to have to pay for it. If you want automobiles, you (and many others) are going to have to pay for them. If you want industrial civilization, you (and many others) are going to have to pay for it.

If you want freedom, you will have to fight for it and those who are exploiting you are going to have to pay for it. If you want a livable planet, at this point you will have to fight for it and those who are killing the planet are going to have to pay for it.

* * *

Schiller's line, too, that "Peace is rarely denied to the peaceful," is more magical thinking, and the people who spout it really should be ashamed of themselves. What about the Arawaks, Semay, Mbuti, Hopi? Peace has been denied them. What about peaceful women who are raped? What about the peaceful children who are abused? What about salmon? What about rivers? What about redwood trees? What about bison? What about prairie dogs? What about passenger pigeons? I hate to steal a line from someone so odious as John Stossel, but give me a break.

* * *

The next pacifist argument is that the ends never justify the means. While adding the word *almost* just before the word *never* makes this true for many trivial ends- I would not, for example, be willing to destroy a landbase so I can magnify my bank account- it's nonsense when it comes to self-defense. Are the people who spout this line saying that the ends of not being raped never justify the means of killing one's assailant? Are they saying that the ends of saving salmon- who have survived for millions of years- and sturgeons- who have survived since the time of the dinosaurs- never justify the means of removing dams without waiting for approval from those who are saying they wish salmon would go extinct so we can get on with living [*sic*]? Are they saying that the ends of children free from pesticide induced cancer and mental retardation are not worth whatever means may be necessary? If so, their sentiments are obscene. We're not playing some theoretical, spiritual, or philosophical game. We're talking about survival. We're talking about poisoned children. We're talking about a planet being

killed. I will do whatever is necessary to defend those I love.

Those who say that ends *never* justify means are of necessity either sloppy thinkers, hypocrites, or just plain wrong. If ends *never* justify means, can these people ride in a car? They are by their actions showing that their ends of getting from one place to another justify the means of driving, which means the cost of using oil, with all the evils carried with it. The same is true for the use of any metal, wood, or cloth products, and so on. You could make the argument that the same is true for the act of eating. After all, the ends of keeping yourself alive through eating evidently justify the means of taking the lives of those you eat. Even if you eat nothing but berries, you are depriving others- from birds to bacteria- of the possibility of eating those particular berries.

You could say I'm reducing this argument to absurdity, but I'm not the one who made the claim that ends *never* justify means. If they want to back off the word *never*, we can leave the realm of dogma and begin a reasonable discussion of what ends we feel justify what means. I suspect, however, that this would soon lead to another impasse, because my experience of "conversations" with pacifists is that beneath the use of this phrase oftentimes is an unwillingness to take responsibility for one's own actions coupled with the same old hubris that declares that humans are separated from and better than the rest of the planet. Witness the pacifist who said to me that he would not harm a single human to save an entire run of salmon. He explicitly states- and probably consciously believes- that ends never justify means, but what he really means is that no humans must be harmed by anyone trying to help a landbase or otherwise bring about social change.

I sometimes get accused of hypocrisy because I use high technology as a tool to try to dismantle technological civilization. While there are certainly ways I'm a hypocrite, that's not one of them, because I have never claimed that the ends never justify the means. I have stated repeatedly that I'll do whatever's necessary to save salmon. That's not code language for blowing up dams. Whatever's necessary for me includes writing, giving talks, using computers, rehabilitating streams, singing songs to the salmon, *and* whatever

else may be appropriate.

Setting rhetoric aside, there is simply no factual support for the statement that ends don't justify means, because it's a statement of values disguised as a statement of morals. A person who says ends don't justify means is simply saying: I value process more than outcome. Someone who says ends do justify means is simply saying: I value outcome more than process. Looked at this way, it becomes absurd to make absolute statements about it. There are some ends that justify some means, and there are some ends that do not. Similarly, the same means may be justified by some people for some ends and not justified by or for others (I would, for example, kill someone who attempted to kill those I love, and I would not kill someone who tried to cut me off on the interstate). It is my joy, responsibility, and honor as a sentient being to make those distinctions, and I pity those who do not consider themselves worthy or capable of making them themselves, and who must rely on slogans instead to guide their actions.

* * *

It's pretty clear to me that our horror of violence is actually a deep terror of responsibility. We don't have issues with someone being killed. We have issues about unmediated killing, about doing it ourselves. And of course we have issues with violence flowing the wrong way up the hierarchy.

* * *

Erasmus's statement, "The most disadvantageous peace is better than the most just war," used to strike me as insane and cowardly (not that this was true of all Erasmus's work). Now I just say I disagree.

Gandhi came out with a different version when he said, "My marriage to non-violence is such an absolute thing that I would rather commit suicide than be deflected from my position." I guess there are ways I can understand this, in that there are things I would kill myself rather than do. But this statement seems inflexible to the point of insanity. Is he saying that if he had the opportunity to stop a rape/murder, but could do so only through

physically stopping the assailant, he would kill himself (and let the other person be raped/murdered) rather than break his sacred vow to non-violence? Is he saying that if he had the opportunity to stop the murder of the planet, but could do so only through physically stopping the assailants, he would kill himself (and let the planet be murdered) rather than violate his sacred vow to non-violence?

Unfortunately, he does seem to be saying these things. Now it's true that Gandhi perceived cowardice as worse even than violence (and please note that while I'm accusing Gandhi of fuzzy thinking, naivete, and, as you'll see in a while, misogyny, never would I accuse him of cowardice: the man was stone cold brave), saying, for example, "Where the choice is between only violence and cowardice, I would advise violence," and, "To take the name of non-violence when there is a sword in your heart is not only hypocritical and dishonest but cowardly." Even more to the point- and if all of Gandhi's words were this great he'd certainly be *my* hero- he said, "Though violence is not lawful, when it is offered in self-defense or for the defense of the defenseless, it is an act of bravery far better than cowardly submission. The latter benefits neither man nor woman. Under violence, there are many stages and varieties of bravery. Every man must judge this for himself. No other person can or has the right." And here's one I like even more: "I have been repeating over and over again that he who cannot protect himself or his nearest and dearest or their honor by nonviolently facing death may and ought to do so by violently dealing with the oppressor. He who can do neither of the two is a burden. He has no business to be the head of a family. He must either hide himself, or must rest content to live forever in helplessness and be prepared to crawl like a worm at the bidding of a bully."

But damn if he doesn't follow this up with more of that old time pacifist religion. His very next paragraph is: "The strength to kill is not essential for self-defense; one ought to have the strength to die. When a man is fully ready to die, he will not even desire to offer violence. Indeed, I may put it down as a self-evident proposition that the desire to kill is in inverse proportion to the desire to die. And history is replete with instances of men who, by dying with courage and compassion on their lips, converted the hearts of their

violent opponents."

Let's do a little exegesis. Sentence one: "The strength to kill is not essential for self-defense; one ought to have the strength to die." Problem: Although this makes a good sound bite, it also makes no sense. The first clause is a statement of faith (why does this not surprise me?), logically and factually unsupported and insupportable yet presented as a statement of fact. The same is true for the second. Perhaps worse, if one of the purposes of self-defense is to actually defend oneself (to keep oneself from harm, even from death), then saying that self-defense requires the strength to die becomes exactly the sort of Orwellian absurdity we've all by now become far too familiar with from *pacifists: self-defense requires the strength to allow self-destruction*, and *self-destruction requires strength* take their fine place alongside *freedom is slavery, war is peace, ignorance is strength*. His sentence would imply that Jews who walked into the showers or laid down so they could be shot in the nape of the neck by members of *einsatzgruppen* were actually acting in their own self-defense. Nonsense. Now sentence two: "When a man is fully ready to die, he will not even desire to offer violence." Once again, a statement of faith, logically and factually unsupported and insupportable yet presented as a statement of fact. I have read hundreds of accounts of soldiers and others (including mothers) who were fully prepared to die who sold their lives as dearly as possible. Sentence three: "Indeed, I may put it down as a self-evident proposition that the desire to kill is inverse proportion to the desire to die." This is actually a pretty cheap rhetorical trick on his part. Any writer knows that if you label something as self-evident people are less likely to examine it, or even if they do and find themselves disagreeing with it, they're prone to feeling kind of stupid: *If it's so self-evident, how stupid must I be not to see it the same way?* A far more sophisticated and accurate examination of the relationship between a desire to kill and a desire to die was provided earlier in this book by Luis Rodriguez. Oftentimes a desire to kill *springs from* a desire to die. It's certainly true that the dominant culture- I've heard it called a thanatocracy- manifests a collective desire to kill self and other. But there is something far deeper and far more creepy going on with this sentence. Read it again: "Indeed, I may

put it down as a self-evident proposition that the desire to kill is inverse proportion to the desire to die.” Let’s pretend it’s true. It is Gospel. You have never in your life read anything so true as this. Now let’s ask ourselves whether Gandhi had a desire to kill. The answer is pretty obviously absolutely not. He said as much many times. What, then, does that mean Gandhi had a desire to do? If we take him at his word, it means he had a correspondingly absolute desire to die. He has an absolute death wish. Suddenly, I understand why he would rather kill himself than break his marriage to non-violence. Suddenly, I understand his body hatred (we’ll get to this in a moment). Suddenly, I understand why Gandhi- and by extension so many other pacifists who are drawn to his teachings- was so often so little concerned with actual physical change in the real physical world. Pacifism as death wish. And don’t blame me for this one, folks: it’s nothing more than a strict literal interpretation of Gandhi’s own text. Gandhi repeatedly stated his absolute desire not to kill, and state here explicitly: “the desire to kill is in inverse proportion to the desire to die.”

But that isn’t even what bothered me most about his paragraph. Sentence four horrified and appalled me: “And history is replete with instances of men who, by dying with courage and compassion on their lips, converted the hearts of their violent opponents.” If Gandhi’s statement contained a shred of evidence to support it, the Nazis would have quickly stopped, domestic violence would cease, the civilized world would not kill the indigenous, factory farms would not exist, vivisection labs would be torn down brick by brick. Worse, by saying this, Gandhi joins the long list of allies of abusers by subtly blaming victims for perpetrator’s further atrocities: *Damn, if only I could have died courageously and compassionately enough, I could have converted my murderer and kept him from killing again. It’s all my fault.* Nonsense. Many killers- and nearly all exploiters- would vastly prefer intended victims not resist. The overwhelming preponderance of evidence just doesn’t support Gandhi’s position.

And his position leads him into (even more) grotesque absurdity. During World War II, as Japan invade Myanmar (then called Burma), Gandhi recommended that if India were invaded, the

Japanese be allowed to take as much as they want. The most effective way for the Indians to resist the Japanese, he said, would be to “make them feel they are not wanted.” I am not making this up. Nor am I choosing an out-of-character statement. Gandhi urged the British to surrender to the Nazis, and recommended that instead of fighting back, both Czechs and Jews should have committed mass suicide (death wish, anyone?). In 1946, with full knowledge of the extent of the Holocaust, Gandhi told his biographer Louis Fisher, “The Jews should have offered themselves to the butcher’s knife. They should have thrown themselves into the sea from the cliffs.”

This is- and all you pacifists can get your gasps out of the way right now- both despicable and insane.

The insanity continues. If you recall, Gandhi said, “Mankind has to get out of violence only through non-violence. Hatred can be overcome only by love.” By now you should be able to spot the premises that, like any good propagandist, he’s trying to slide by you. Violence is something humankind “has got to get out of.” Non-violence is the only way to accomplish this. Hatred is something that needs to be overcome. Love is the only way to accomplish that.

These premises are statements of faith. They are utterly unsupported and unsupportable in the real world, and they are extremely harmful. Let’s go back to the same basic example we’ve been using. A man breaks into a woman’s home. He pulls out a knife. He is going to rape and kill her. She has a gun. Perhaps is she just shows him by shining example the beauty of nonviolence, perhaps if she dies with courage and compassion on her lips- or if she offers herself to the butcher’s knife or throws herself into the sea from a cliff- she will convert his heart and he will realize the error of his ways and repent, to go and rape no more. Perhaps not. If she guesses wrong, she dies. And so do the rapist’s next victims.

Gandhi’s statement reveals an almost total lack of understanding of both abusive and psychopathological dynamics. His comment is one of the worst things you can say to anyone in an abusive situation ,

and one of the things abusers most want to hear. As I mentioned earlier, among the most powerful allies of abusers are those who say to victims, "You should show him some compassion even if he has done bad things. Don't forget that he is a human, too." As Lundy Bancroft commented, "To suggest to her that his need for compassion should come before her right to live free from abuse is consistent with the abuser's outlook. I have repeatedly seen the tendency among friends and acquaintances of an abused woman to feel that it is their responsibility to make sure that she realizes *what a good person he really is inside*- in other words, to stay focused on his needs rather than her own, which is a mistake." I want to underscore that Gandhi's perspective is, following Bancroft, "consistent with the abuser's outlook."

Too often pacifists have said to me, "When you look at a CEO, you are looking at yourself. He's a part of you, and you're a part of him. If you ever hope to reach him, you must recognize the CEO in your own heart, and you must reach out with compassion to this CEO in your heart, and to the CEO in the board room." It's revealing that none of these pacifists have ever said to me, "When you look at a clearcut, you are looking at yourself. It is a part of you, and you are a part of it. If you ever hope to help it, you must recognize the clearcut in your own heart, and you must reach out with compassion to this clearcut in your heart, and to the clearcut on the ground." The same is true for tuna, rivers, mountainsides. It's remarkable that pacifists tell me to look at the killer and see myself, while never telling me to look at the victim and see myself: they are telling me to identify with the killer, not the victim. This happens so consistently that I have come to understand it's no accident, but reveals with whom the people who say it do and do not themselves identify (and fear).

So far as psychopaths, Gandhi ignores their first characteristic: a "callous unconcern for the feelings of others." Far worse, he fails to understand that some people are unreachable. He wrote Hitler a letter requesting he change his ways, and was evidently surprised when Hitler didn't listen to him.

His statement also ignores the role of entitlement in atrocity. I can

love Charles Hurwitz all I want, I can nonviolently write letters and nonviolently sit in trees, and so long as he feels entitled to destroy forests to pad his bank account, and so long as he is backed by the full power of the state, within this social structure, none of that will cause him to change in the slightest. Nor, and this is the point, will it help the forests. Similarly, so long as men feel entitled to control women, loving them won't change them, nor will it help women.

There's yet another problem with Gandhi's statement, which is that he has made the same old unwarranted conflation of love and nonviolence on one hand, and hatred and violence on the other.

There is a sense in which the last sentence- and only the last sentence- of his statement could be true, with some slight modifications. Instead of saying, "Hatred can be overcome only by love," we could say, "If someone hates you, your best and most appropriate and most powerful responses will come out of a sense of self-love." I like that infinitely better. It's far more accurate, intellectually honest, useful, flexible, and applicable across a wide range of circumstances. But there's the key right there, isn't it? Within this culture we're all taught to hate ourselves (and to identify with our oppressors, who hate us too, and call it love).

* * *

This leads to the next line by Gandhi often tossed around by pacifists: "When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won. There have been tyrants and murderers and for a time they seem invincible but in the end, they always fall- Think of it, ALWAYS."

You know how there are some people whose work you're supposed to respect because everyone else seems to? And you know how at least with some of these people your respect fades over time, slowly, with each new piece of information that you gain? And you know how sometimes you feel you must be crazy, or a bad person, or you must be missing something, because everyone keeps telling you how great this person is, and you just don't get it? And you know how you keep fighting to maintain your respect for this

person, but the information keeps coming in, until at long last you just can't do it any more? That's how it was with me and Gandhi. I lost a lot of respect when I learned some of the comments I've mentioned here. I lost more when I learned that because he opposed Western medicine, he didn't want his wife to take penicillin, even at risk to her life, because it would be administered with a hypodermic needle; yet this opposition did not extend to himself: he took quinine and was even operated on for appendicitis. I lost yet more when I learned that he was so judgmental of his sons that he disowned his son Harilal (who later became an alcoholic) because he disapproved of the woman Harilal chose to marry. When his other son, Manilal, loaned money to Harilal, Gandhi disowned him, too. When Manilal had an affair with a married woman, Gandhi went public and pushed for the woman to have her head shaved. I lost more respect when I learned of Gandhi's body hatred (but with his fixation on purity, hatred of human (read animal) emotions, and death wish this shouldn't have surprised me), and even more that he refused to have sex with his wife for the last thirty-eight years of their marriage (in fact he felt that people should have sex only three or four times in their lives). I lost even more when I found out how upset he was when he had a nocturnal emission. I lost even more when I found out that in order to test his commitment to celibacy, he had beautiful young women lie next to him naked through the night: evidently his wife- whom he described as looking like a "meek cow"- was no longer desirable enough to be a solid test. All these destroyed more respect for Gandhi (although I do recognize it's possible for someone to be a shitheel and still say good things, just as it's possible for nice people to give really awful advice). But the final push was provided by this comment attributed to him: "When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won. There have been tyrants and murderers and for a time they seem invincible but in the end, they always fail- Think of it, ALWAYS." This is as dismissive as his treatment of his wife and sons. It's as objectifying as his treatment of the young women he used as tests. It's as false as his advice to Jews, Czechs, and Britons. The last 6,000 years have seen a juggernaut of destruction roll across the planet. Thousands of cultures have been eradicated. Species are disappearing by the hour. I do not know

what planet he is describing, nor what history. Not ours. This statement- one of those rallying cries thrown out consistently by pacifists- is wrong. It is dismissive. It is literally and by definition insane, by which I mean not in touch with the real physical world.

Further, even if it were accurate- which it absolutely isn't, except in the cosmic sense of everything eventually failing- it's irrelevant. So what if the tyrant eventually fails? What about the damage done in the meantime? That's like saying that because a rapist will eventually die anyway we need not stop him now.

Pacifism, Part II

The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims, have been born of earnest struggle. The conflict has been exciting, agitating, all-absorbing, and for the time being, putting all other tumults to silence. It must do this or it does nothing. If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.

This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them, and these will continue till they are resisted with words or blows, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress. In the light of these ideas, Negroes will be hunted at the North, and flogged at the South so long as they submit to those devilish outrages, and make no resistance, either moral or physical. Men may not get all they par for in this world, but they must certainly pay for all they get. If we ever get free from the oppressions and wrongs heaped upon us, we must pay for their removal. We must do this by labor, by suffering, by sacrifice, and if needs be, by our lives and the lives of others.

- *Frederick Douglas*

I've heard too many pacifists say that violence only begets violence. This is manifestly not true. Violence can beget many things. Violence can beget submission, as when a master beats a slave (some slaves will eventually fight back, in which case this violence will beget more violence; but some slaves will submit for the rest of their lives, as we see; and some will even create a religion or spirituality that attempts to make a virtue of their submission, as we also see; some will write and others repeat that the most disadvantageous peace is better than the most just war; some will speak of the need to love their oppressors; and some will say that the meek shall inherit what's left of the earth). Violence can beget material wealth, as when a robber or a capitalist steals from someone. Violence can beget violence, as when someone attacks someone who fights back. Violence can beget a cessation of violence, as when someone fights off or kills an assailant (it's utterly nonsensical as well as insulting to say that a woman who kills a rapist is begetting more violence).

Back to Gandhi: "We must be the change we wish to see." This ultimately meaningless statement manifests the magical thinking and narcissism we've come to expect from dogmatic pacifists. I can change myself all I want, and if dams still stand, salmon still die. If global warming proceeds apace, birds still starve. If factory trawlers still run, oceans still suffer. If factory farms still pollute, dead zones still grow. If vivisection labs still remain, animals are still tortured.

I have worked very hard to become emotionally healthy, to heal from this culture, my childhood, and my schooling. I'm a genuinely nice guy. But I don't do that emotional work to try to help salmon. I do it to make life better for myself and those around me. My emotional health doesn't help salmon one bit, except insofar as that health leads me to dismantle that which is killing them. This is not cognitively challenging at all.

Next: If you use violence against exploiters, you become like they are. This cliché is, once again, absurd, with no relation to the real world. It is based on the flawed notion that all violence is the same.

It is obscene to suggest that a woman who kills a man attempting to rape her becomes like a rapist. It is obscene to suggest that by fighting back Tecumseh became like those who were stealing his people's land. It is obscene to suggest that the Jews who fought back against their exterminators at Auschwitz/Birkenau, Treblinka, and Sobibor became like the Nazis. It is obscene to suggest that a tiger who kills a human at a zoo becomes like one of her captors.

Related to that is the notion that committing an act of violence destroys your soul. A couple of years ago I shared a stage with another dogmatic pacifist. He said, "To harm another human being irretrievably damages your very core."

I didn't think Tecumseh would have agreed. I asked, "How do you know?"

He shook his head. "I don't know what you're asking."

"How do you know that violence irretrievably damages your very core?"

He looked at me as though I had just asked him how he knows that gravity exists.

I asked, "Have you ever killed anyone?"

"Of course not."

"So you don't know this by direct experience. Have any of your friends ever killed anyone?"

Disgust crossed his face. "Of course not."

"Have you ever spoken with anyone who has killed someone?"

"No."

"So your statement is an article of faith, unsupported, based not on direct experience or conversations with anyone who would know."

He said, "It's self-evident."

Nice rhetorical trick, I thought. I said, "I have friends at the prison who've killed people, and I'm acquaintances with many others who've done the same. Because I've heard so many pacifists make this claim before, I asked these men if killing really changed them."

He didn't look at me. He certainly didn't ask about their answers.

I told him anyway. "The answers are unpredictable, and as varied as the people themselves. A few were devastated, just as you suggest. Not many, but a few. A bunch said it didn't fundamentally change anything. They were still the exact same people they were before. One said he'd been stunned by how easy it is, physically, to take someone's life, and that made him realize how easily he, too, could be killed. The act of killing made him feel very frightened, he said. Another said it made him feel incredibly powerful, and if felt really, really good. Another said the first time was hard, but after that it quickly became easy."

The pacifist looked like he was going to throw up.

I thought, *This is just reality, man. Reality is a lot more complex than any dogma ever could be. That's one of the problems with abstract principles: they're always smaller and simpler than life, and the only way to make them fit your abstractions is to cut off great parts of it.* I said, "A few told me their answers depended entirely on who they were killing: they regretted some of their murders, but wouldn't take back others even if it meant they could get out of prison. One man, for example, overheard a rapist bragging how he'd made his victim tell him she liked it, and made her beg for more so he wouldn't kill her. The man I spoke with invited the rapist into his cell for a friendly game of chess, and strangled him to death because of what he did to that woman. That murder had felt right at the time, he said, and he knew it would feel right for the next fifteen years till he got out. And one man told me that the thing he was most proud of in his entire life was that he killed three people."

The pacifist shook his head. "That's really sick," he said.

"Let me tell you the story," I responded. "He was a migrant farm worker from a large Mexican family. He was fifteen. One day he didn't go into the fields but to town. That day three men killed his father. Soon there was a family meeting, and he violated the family tradition by interrupting his elders. He insisted that because he was the youngest, the only one without a family relying on him, that he be the one to avenge their father. For the next few years he worked hard to establish a business that would support his mother later on, and when the time came he killed the three men who had killed his father. The next day he went to the police station and turned himself in. He's now serving life."

"He should have let the law handle it."

"I cannot blame him for his actions. They were human." I paused a moment, then said, "And I have known others who killed because they were human I have known women who killed their abusers. They had no regrets. Not one. Not ever."

"You cannot sway me," he said. "They should have let the law handle it."

"The law," I replied. "The law. Let me tell you another story. A woman killed her mother's boyfriend, who had battered her mother for years and finally murdered her mother. And- surprise of all surprises- the district attorney refused to charge him with murder. I suppose this was because women aren't people whose lives actually count. So the woman did a sit-in at the DA's office. For three days, she just kept saying over and over "You're going to call it murder." The DA finally had her arrested for trespassing. Having gotten no satisfaction from the system, she bought a gun, tracked the boyfriend down and shot him dead. Because of her sit-in stunt, her lawyers were able to argue temporary insanity. She served two years in prison and didn't regret a single day of it."

The pacifists who say that fighting back against those who are exploiting you or those you love destroys your soul have it all

backwards. It is just as wrong and just as harmful to not fight back when one should as it is to fight when one should not. In fact in some cases it may be more harmful. The Native Americans spoke of fighting, killing, and dying- and who fought, killed, and died- to protect not only their land but their dignity from theft by the civilized understood this. So did Zapata. So did the Jews who rose up against the Nazis. Of those who rose up against their exterminators at Auschwitz/Birkenau, and who were able to kill seventy SS, destroy one crematorium and severely damage another, concentration camp survivor Bruno Bettelheim wrote that "they did only what we would expect all human beings to do: to use their death, if they could not save their lives, to weaken or hinder the enemy as much as possible; to use even their doomed selves for making extermination harder, or maybe impossible, not a smooth running process... If they could do so, so could others. Why didn't they? Why did they throw their lives away instead of making things hard for the enemy? Why did they make a present of their very being to the SS instead of to their families, their friends, even to fellow prisoners; this is the haunting question." Bettelheim also wrote, this specifically of Anne Frank's family, "There is little doubt that the Franks, who were able to provide themselves with so much, could have provided themselves with a gun or two had they wished. They could have shot down one or two of the SS men who came for them. There was no surplus of SS men. The loss of an SS with every Jew arrested would have noticeably hindered the functioning of the police state." Bettelheim- and he is joined by many others in this- states explicitly that such actions could most likely have slowed the extermination process. Ward Churchill responds, "It should be noted that similar revolts in Sobibor and Treblinka in 1943 were even more effective than the one at Auschwitz/Birkenau a few months later; Sobibor had to be closed altogether, a reality that amplifies and reinforces Bettelheim's rather obvious point."

Bettelheim comments, in words he could have written about us as we watch our TVs and wait for the end of the world, "The persecution of the Jews was aggravated, slow step by slow step, when no violent fighting back occurred. It may have been Jewish acceptance, without retaliatory fight, of ever harsher discrimination

and degradation that first gave the SS the idea that they could be gotten to the point where they would walk into the gas chambers on their own. Most Jews who did not believe in business-as-usual survived the Second World War. As the Germans approached, they left everything behind and fled to Russia, much as many of them distrusted the Soviet system... Those who stayed on to continue business-as-usual moved toward their own destruction and perished. Thus in the deepest sense the walk to the gas chamber was only the last consequence of a philosophy of business-as-usual."

Bettelheim also writes, in words that are just as applicable, "Rebellion could only have saved the life they were going to lose anyway, or the lives of others." And, "Inertia it was that led millions of Jews into the ghettos the SS had created for them. It was inertia that made hundreds of thousands of Jews sit home, waiting for their executioners."

Ward Churchill sums up Bettelheim's description of this inertia, which Bettelheim "considers the basis for Jewish passivity in the face of genocide as being grounded in a profound desire for 'business-as-usual,' the following of rules, the need to not accept reality or act upon it. Manifested in the irrational belief that in remaining 'reasonable and responsible,' unobtrusively resisting by continuing normal day-to-day activities proscribed by the Nazis through the Nuremberg Laws and other infamous legislation, and 'not alienating anyone,' this attitude implied that a more-or-less humane Jewish policy might be morally imposed upon the Nazi state by Jewish pacifism itself."

Bettelheim observes that "we all wish to subscribe to this business-as-usual philosophy, and forget that it hastens our own destruction," and that we have a "wish to forget the gas chambers and to glorify the attitude of going on with business-as-usual, even in a holocaust."

But remember, the Jews who participated in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, even those who went on what they thought were suicide missions, had a higher rate of survival than those who did not fight back. Never forget that.

Instead of saying, "If we fight back, we run the risk of becoming like they are. If we fight back, we run the risk of destroying our souls," we must say, "If we do not fight back, we run the risk of not just acting like but *becoming* slaves. If we do not fight back, we run the risk of destroying our souls and our dignity. If we do not fight back, we run the risk of allowing those who are exterminating the world to move ever faster."

Pacifism, Part III

The primary purpose of everything we do must be to make this society increasingly unmanageable. That's key. The more unmanageable the society becomes, the more of its resources the state must expend in efforts to maintain order "at home." The more this is true, the less the state's capacity to project itself outwardly, both geographically and temporally. Eventually, a point of stasis will be reached, and, in a system such as this one, anchored as it is in the notion of perpetual growth, this amounts to a sort of "Doomsday Scenario" because, from there, things start moving in the other direction- "falling apart," as it were- and that creates the conditions of flux in which alternative social forms can really begin to take root and flourish.

- Ward Churchill

The next message thrown out by pacifists is that we must never use violence, because if we do the mass media will distort our message.

I'm presuming that the people who say this have never actually *read* a newspaper or watched the news, because an unstated and unfounded premise here is that the purpose of the capitalist media is to tell something that resembles the truth. It's not. Well, maybe I should correct myself. The purpose of the capitalist media is to tell something that *resembles*- is a toxic mimic of- the truth. The truth itself? That comes only often enough to keep us guessing. The mass media distorts our message anyway. What do you think the mass media is *for*?

Two examples. The other day a translator who works for the U.S. occupying troops in Iraq was killed. This happens often. But this time the *San Francisco Chronicle* featured an account of the woman's life and death on the front page. The article began: "Rwaida's death hit everyone hard. Partly because she was a buddy they had known for a long time. Mostly, because she was an innocent, brutally slain for the simple reason she worked for the Americans." We learn later in the article that she was more than an interpreter to the occupiers. She once pushed a U.S. soldier out of the path of a bullet. She was a "buddy," said one soldier. Another said she was "one of us." Soldiers flirted with her, asked her to marry them, to which she responded, in true American fashion, "How much money you got, eh?" The occupiers have now hired another interpreter, a twenty-two year old woman the soldiers call Nadia. Nadia says, "I am not afraid. I know this is my duty and that I should do that." The article states that she appreciates the money the occupiers give her, but more important than money is the fact that "Morals should be the most important thing for everyone.:" The reported for the U.S. corporate press lets her mouth the real moral of this story: "I have great respect for the Christian people. They respect God and I love God. Too many Muslims hurt each other."

What just happened? I can't speak for you, but I feel like I just got mind-fucked. Of course, that's what the capitalist press is supposed to do. There are three main avenues by which this writer has just attacked us. The first is that he chose to write an article about this woman, while ignoring the many thousands of women killed by U.S. troops. To give each of these women the same attention would take more space than the newspaper has. The second is that the journalist opens his piece by telling us that this woman was "innocent," then goes on to describe the actions of a collaborator. Imagine the Iraqi military invading the United States. Imagine them occupying this country. Imagine a woman from Phoenix, Arizona who goes to work for these occupying soldiers, who flirts with them, who is their buddy. She would receive the treatment that collaborators of all times have received, which is the treatment this woman received. And the occupiers would call her an innocent hero. The third avenue of attack is the final sentence: this woman

was not killed because she was a collaborator, but instead because Muslims have a nasty habit of hurting each other.

My point? All writers are propagandists. And lest you think that the story above merely makes the pacifists' point, that if the Iraqis would simply lay down their arms the press would tell their story fairly, let's take a look at an editorial in the following Sunday's *Chronicle*. The editorial is entitled "Biggest pests of all- agricultural biotech opponents," and says that those who oppose genetic engineering have an "anti-social agenda," and that "they should be held accountable." Check out the authors first sentence: "California is under attack by terrorists, six-legged ones: glassy-winged sharpshooters, which are leaf-hopping insects that are among the state's most insidious agricultural pests."

Okay, so what just happened this time? Mind-fuck again, of course, but what did we expect? I have been told be pacifists that I need to watch my rhetoric or environmentalists will be labeled terrorists. I have news for them: if insects are labeled terrorists then it doesn't much matter what we say or do. If we oppose economic production, even by sucking the sap from grapevines, we are going to be called names.

"The press is the hired agent of a monied system," wrote Henry Adams, "set up for no other purpose than to tell lies where the interests are concerned."

They're going to lie about us no matter what we do, so we may as well do what we want.

* * *

Another night, another talk. Another pacifist plagues me like a biting black fly. He says, "Every act of violence sets the movement back ten years."

I respond, "How do you know that?"

He stares at me, this time as though I've asked him to prove not the existence of gravity, but of air. He shakes his head.

"What evidence do you have?"

Still shaking his head, "I don't..."

"It's an article of faith. You can't have any evidence to support your position because no environmentalists or animal rights activists have yet committed any acts of violence against a human being, which means they *can't* have set the movement back."

"They've burned SUVs."

"That's not violence."

"It still sets the cause back."

"How?"

"It harms public opinion."

"Okay," I say. "Let me know if this is how it goes. So long as activists behave themselves and follow the rules- set up by those in power- then some theoretical mass of people will be willing to listen to them, maybe even agree with them, and possibly even send them money."

"Let's leave money out of this."

I continue, "But if someone breaks the rules- set up by those in power- then the great mass of fence-sitters will write good activists like you off as lunatics. Then you'll have to be good for another ten years to make up for the lost goodwill, right?"

"I don't like how you're spinning it, but it's okay."

I keep going, "We have to follow the rules of polite discourse in order to be heard. But why do these rules apply only to us? Why is it that when the people and companies and institutions we're opposing commit violence or otherwise break the rules of polite

discourse it doesn't set them back ten years? Further, if we only act in ways that are acceptable to those who are benefiting from the exploitation in the first place, we will never be able to stop the exploitation."

There were plenty of other questions that night, so I moved on, but had I more time I would have said more. I would have said for the thousandth time that all life is circumstantial, and that some acts of violence may set some movements back some number of years, and that some acts of violence may move them forward. Some acts of non-violence may set some movements back, and some may move them forward. Some failures to act at the right time with the right tactic (violent or non-violent) may set movements back or move them forward. The trick is knowing when and how to act. Well, that's the first trick. The *real* trick is kicking aside our fear and acting on what we already know (because, truly, we depend on those around us, and they are dying because they depend on us, too).

I would have talked about resistance movements in Latin America, Asia, and Africa where violence helped throw off overt colonialism. I would have talked about resistance by indigenous peoples. I would have talked about violence by abolitionists, and I would have mentioned that Harriet Tubman carried opiates with her, and she carried a gun. The opiates were to drug the people she was transporting in case they got too frightened, and the gun was to shoot them if they wouldn't stop screaming. Did Harriet Tubman set "the movement" back ten years?

Next, I would have recalled where I've previously heard this sentiment of fearing that more militant actions will threaten one's own resistance, which is in accounts of discussions between death camp inmates about whether or not they should try to escape. There are those who wish to make things as comfortable as they can within the confines of the razor wire and electrified fences, and those who want to break away entirely. Of course those who want to break away will "set things back" for those whose goals are limited to gaining a sliver of soap and an extra potato in their broth.

Trauma expert Judith Herman describes the "constriction in initiative and planning" that often takes place among captives: "Prisoners who have not been entirely 'broken' do not give up the capacity for active engagement with their environment. On the contrary, they often approach the small daily tasks of survival with extraordinary ingenuity and determination. But the field of initiative is increasingly narrowed within the confines dictated by the perpetrator. The prisoner no longer thinks of how to escape, but rather how to stay alive, or how to make captivity more bearable. A concentration camp inmate schemes to obtain a pair of shoes, a spoon, or a blanket; a group of political prisoners conspires to grow a few vegetables; a prostitute maneuvers to hide some money from her pimp; a battered woman teaches her children to hide when an attack is imminent."

Now, I certainly have nothing but respect for those environmentalists working to save scraps of wilderness (something I've done myself) and the same is true for others of the abused as they try to hide their children, hide some money, grow vegetables, or sneak a spook, and given the choice I'd prefer to be slightly more comfortable as a prisoner rather than less. But I'd rather not be a prisoner at all.

An act of violence will set the movement back ten years? Good, we only have another several thousand years to go, then. The existence of an environmental movement at all is an acknowledgement that something is desperately wrong with the culture. A healthy culture would have no need, any more than it would need battered women's shelters or drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers, or those sanctuaries I mentioned that are refuges from atrocity. And ultimately I don't give a shit about the health of the movement, any movement, anyway. I care about the health of the landscape.

Reading Herman's passage suddenly helped me understand the desperate vehemence of some dogmatic pacifists. I certainly understand and have an appreciation for differences of opinion, and I've repeatedly described my support for and participation in nonviolent resistance, yet so often when I have spoken with

pacifists I have encountered an absolute refusal to even enter into reasonable discussion about the use of violence. Recall the argument of the pacifist on stage: "Violence schmiolence." This man was not stupid, as this comment makes him seem.

But now I understand it. And I understand, also, a primary reason we are so terribly ineffective in our attempts at resistance. It is because we are captives of this culture who have not been entirely "broken," but have been traumatized to the point that our "field of initiative" has been "increasingly narrowed within confines dictated by the perpetrator." Judith Herman describes this process of narrowing in words that will surely resonate with many of us: "The constriction in the capacities for active engagement with the world, which is common even after a single trauma, becomes most pronounced in chronically traumatized people, who are often described as passive or helpless. Some theorists have mistakenly applied the concepts of 'learned helplessness' to the situation of battered women and other chronically traumatized people. Such concepts tend to portray the victim as simply defeated or apathetic, whereas in fact a much more complex struggle is usually taking place. In most cases the victim has not given up. But she has learned that every action will be watched, that most actions will be thwarted, and that she will pay dearly for failure. To the extent that the perpetrator has succeeded in enforcing his demand for total submission, she will perceive any exercise of her own initiative as insubordination."

Now reread the passage, substituting the word *activist* for *victim*. Consider especially the sentences, "In most cases the activist has not given up. But she has learned that every action will be watched, that most actions will be thwarted, and that she will pay dearly for failure." There we have the psychology of most environmental activism in two sentences.

And consider Herman's next passage in light of another complaint of pacifists, that if we commit an act of violence, the state will come down hard on us. She states, "Prolonged captivity [and several thousand years of civilization certainly counts as prolonged] undermines and destroys the ordinary sense of a relatively safe

sphere of initiative, in which there is some tolerance for trial and error. To the chronically traumatized person [and to the civilized person, to the slave] any action has potentially dire consequences. There is no room for mistakes. Rosencof describes his constant expectation of punishment: 'I'm in a perpetual cringe. I'm constantly stopping to let whoever is behind me pass: my body keeps expecting a blow.'"

And the blows will come, and keep coming, till civilization is no more. It has shown itself to be insatiable, implacable, the demand for submission ultimately total. Indigenous Quichua in the village of Sarayacu, Ecuador recently refused an offer of \$60,000 for an oil company to drill on their land. A spokesperson said, "We are fighting not only for Sarayacu, but for all Amazon communities. Petroleum development has been a disaster in Ecuador, generating environmental, social, and cultural crises, and ultimately causing the extinction of indigenous peoples. We want to maintain our way of living, free of contamination, in harmony with nature." The response by the Ecuadoran Minister of Energy Eduardo Lopez was, as one reporter put it, to announce a "total opening of the southern Amazon to oil exploitation and to describe organizations that oppose the policy as undesirable. He also said he preferred to come to an agreement with Sarayacu "before employing force."

Here is the pattern, as clear as it is every other time. If you let us destroy your community and your landbase, we will give you money. If you do not except the money, we will destroy you as well.

* * *

A story, and then a study.

The story, unfortunately true, is told here in the words of an extraordinary forest activist named Remedy: "Humboldt County, California: Five Mattole Forest Defense activists were arrested early Wednesday morning after serving a subpoena to Pacific Lumber's head of Security. Carl Anderson, an ex-sheriff's deputy, who has led the timber corporation's face-to-face opposition to activists in the woods for over a decade, was served a subpoena to appear at the infamous pepper spray trial in San Francisco, which starts

September 7. The case dates back to 1997, when non-violent forest activists were subjected to torture, in the form of pepper spray swabbed in their eyes [by Humboldt County Sheriffs, the same department with the near-perfect zero percent rate of going after rapists. The Sheriffs videotaped themselves swabbing pepper directly onto the eyeballs of activists who had locked down in the office of a Congressman deeply beholden to Pacific Lumber.] The pepper spray victims, who are all plaintiffs in the case, subpoenaed Anderson to testify at trial.

“Both the service of the subpoena, and the subsequent assault, took place on state park land near the entrance to PL property. The activists documented proper service of the subpoena with a video camera, as they have learned the hard way that PL representatives have ignored legal subpoenas in the past. Activists have been threatened and unlawfully detained during previous attempts to serve legal documents in another pending case involving PL.

“Shortly after the subpoena was served, activists were met by a truck from Columbia Helicopters, which is contracted by PL to stack logs from clear-cuts. Activists reported the truck driver was aggressive with his driving, pushing into activists' bodies to get through them. When another truck appeared, this one a personal red pickup truck, the driver jumped out and assaulted the woman with the camera, which was held around her neck by a strap. After he wrestled with the woman, throwing her to the ground, he began choking her with the strap as he attempted to take the camera from her. She tried to protect the camera by wrapping her body around it, but he was determined to take it. He pulled out a knife and eventually cut the strap, but not without cutting the woman in the process.

“The sheriffs arrived sometime thereafter, but refused to take reports from activists. They did, however, take notes on the report offered by Carl Anderson. The activists attempted to notify the deputies that they had been assaulted, to which Anderson reportedly joked to the Officer Carla Bolton, 'What are you going to do, arrest me?' Given the number of times activists have witnessed Anderson giving orders to the sheriffs, opening the doors to their

trucks and helping himself to their vehicle phones and equipment, the answer wasn't hard to guess. Five activists were arrested, and the videotape and mangled camera confiscated along with the proof of service of the subpoena.

“As of late Friday morning, the activists are still in jail, waiting arraignment.”

This is one way violence routinely plays out in this culture.

Now, the study, in the words of Brian Martin, author of *Nonviolence Versus Capitalism*: “In the early 1970s, a group of researchers investigated attitudes to violence by surveying over 1,000 U.S. men. Among their revealing findings were that more than half the men thought that burning draft cards was violence and more than half thought that police shooting looters was not violence. The researchers concluded that 'American men tend to define acts of dissent as "violence" when they perceived the dissenters as undesirable people.' In other words, many of the U.S. men used the label 'violent' when they thought something was bad and 'nonviolent' when they thought it was good.”

This will come as no surprise to anyone who has paid any attention to premise four of this book, It will come as no surprise to anyone who has paid any attention to this culture.

Now the letter. I sent Remedy's article to a friend, who wrote me a letter back. It read: “You know, the people who always insist on 'letting the system work' are the ones who have never actually tried to do anything. I was thinking how I could, in a matter of minutes, come up with a long list of men- easily into triple digits- who have raped, battered, molested, stalked, and tortured women and girls. And I can't think of one who has ever gone to jail. Hell, I can't think of one who's even gone to trial.

“My friend Mari was in a feminist theory class once where the professor asked one of those ridiculous new age questions about 'What would you do if you only had thirty days to live?' And of course everybody comes back with 'I'd go to the ocean' and 'I'd sit

outside and smell the flowers' or whatever. Except Mari who said, 'I'd make a list of all the men who have raped women- just the women I know personally- and I would get a gun and I would take out as many as I could until I got caught.' The class was horrified. Her response was, 'And what else is going to stop them?'

"I think there's a tremendous psychological barrier here. People really want to believe that the world is fair- fair enough that even if injustice happens, it will eventually be righted by the rule of law. 'The system may need some change, but it's essentially sound.' Because otherwise it's just unbearable. And you are then faced with your own agency and responsibility, and acting on that will literally make you an outlaw. Better to keep buying recycled toner cartridges and taking your kids to multicultural story hour at the library and vaguely believing it'll all come out right in the end.

"These people always have lovely anecdotes to back them up. I remember once at a weekend event I attended, there was a man I knew *for a fact* was a child molester. And there were children present. There was a point where the women and men split into separate groups so I said to the women's group what I knew, and how I knew it, and asked if anyone wanted to help me make him leave. No, of course nobody wanted to do that: 'He needs healing!' 'He needs community!' 'That's what we're here for!' I could see there were others in the group looking down and not looking at me, obviously confused and afraid to buck the new age articles of faith. Eventually the whole debate turned on two points. One, I was too angry and also needed healing, and because I wouldn't 'admit' that then no one had to listen to me. And two, everything was getting so much better in the world, everything. Proof? Somebody had seen a man in a pickup truck with right-wing bumper stickers get out of his truck and pick up some garbage on the side of the road. I'm like, huh? So fucking what? Lots of people hate litter. The KKK adopted a highway in Missouri to keep clean. What does that have to do with sexual abuse being basic socialization in patriarchy?

"And of course, when it's all said and done, two of the women came up to me and desperately wanted to know who the man was so they could keep their kids away from him. They already had him

pegged as a creep because of how he'd been behaving. And 'Thanks for speaking up, sorry I didn't help you, you're so brave...' I'm not that goddamn brave. If I was that brave, that man would have come to serious bodily harm. All I was asking for was the nonviolent approach- eject him from the event, let him know some people were onto him and maybe were watching him. Protect the kids. I mean if we aren't going to protect children, what are we willing to do? Is the answer really nothing?"

* * *

I asked a friend what he thought is meant by the phrase, "Every act of violence sets the movement back ten years."

He responded, "I think it's a cop out mostly driven by fear. That's certainly a cop out that too often I take myself. More often than not, before I say anything radical or militant at all in any sort of public forum, I wonder who is taking in my words. And I wonder what will be the consequences if I say something that may threaten the worldview of those in power. Jumper cables hooked up to my testicles are one of my biggest fears. Another fear that runs through my mind is that some members of the Black Panthers haven't seen the light of day since the seventies. There's a reason those in power do these things: they work. And when the fear of these forms of retribution takes control of our hearts and minds, pacifism can grow to seem a viable option. I know from my experience as a former pacifist that pacifism won't piss off too many people. Judging by my own fears, and my reaction to those fears, saying that violence will set back a cause may just be bowing to the consequences of pissing off those in power."

He paused, then continued, "I think identity has a lot to do with resistance to violent acts. It's pretty apparent to us all at a very early age that you're absolutely forbidden by the master to use the 'tools of the master to destroy the master's house.' Imagine a child who is routinely beaten by a two-by-four, who one day picks it up and fights back. Imagine especially what happens to this child if he's not yet big enough to *effectively* fight back, to win. Not good. On the larger scale I don't think many people are willing to identify themselves with these types of acts or with anyone willing to

commit these types of acts simply because it is forbidden by those in power and therefore to be feared.

“And as much as I'd hate to have my testicles electrified, I don't think the fear is even primarily physical, but instead is something even deeper. We are social creatures, and our biggest fear is to not be accepted. Unfortunately, a lot of people want to be accepted, and to be liked, by those at the top of the hierarchy. I sometimes think back to our social groups in high school. You could be hanging out with a friend, and when someone a bit more popular joins the group your friend's loyalty might change real fast. Your friend wants to be accepted by the more popular person. Sometimes your friend won't want to identify with you anymore. If that means making you feel inferior to get a chuckle out of the popular person, well, that's what will happen. We've all seen this. This type of dynamic is played out not only in high school, but also in society in general on a daily basis.”

Another short pause, and then he concluded, “The way I see it, the phrase about setting the movement back is coming from a place of fear. It surely can't be coming from the perspective of successful pacifist resistance to the machine. If it did, we wouldn't be here discussing how to stop the atrocities committed by this culture.”

* * *

The landbase is not only primary, it is everything. It is the source of all life. After all is said and done- and usually more is said than done- the reality is that our landbases are being killed. We can be as spiritually groovy as we want, and it won't matter. We can be as pacifistic as we want, and it won't matter. We can be as violent as we want, and it won't matter. We can write or read books, and it won't matter. None of this will matter except insofar as it helps stop the murder of our landbases. It really is that simple. The health of our landbase is the gauge by which those who come after will measure us. It is the gauge by which every one of our actions must be measured.

* * *

A few pages ago I referred to another oft-mentioned pacifist

argument, that we must not commit an act of violence (or I would say counterviolence) because if we do, the state will respond with overwhelming violence back at us and at anyone else who happens to be in the area. After hearing all the other arguments against violence that don't make any sense to me, I've always found this one refreshingly honest. There's no appeal to a faux higher moral ground, no failure of logic presented as moral imperative, no doublespeak. Nothing but good old-fashioned fear.

From the beginning the state has been founded on and supported by the threat of violence. Remember Stanley Diamond's famous opening line to his book *In Search of the Primitive*: “Civilization originates in conquest abroad and repression at home.” Or to bring this up to date, consider the following report from a “peaceful” protest in Miami: “No one should call what [Police Chief] Timoney runs in Miami a police force. It's a paramilitary group. Thousands of soldiers, dressed in khaki uniforms with full black body armor and gas masks, marching in unison through the streets, banging on their shields, chanting, 'back...back...back.' There were armored personnel carriers and helicopters. The forces fired indiscriminately into crowds of unarmed protesters. Scores of people were hit with skin-piercing rubber bullets; thousands were gassed with an array of chemicals. On several occasions, police fired loud concussion grenades into the crowds. Police shocked people with electric tasers. Demonstrators were shot in the back as they retreated. On young guy's apparent crime was holding his fingers in a peace sign in front of the troops. They shot him multiple times, including once in the stomach at point blank range.”

The motto of the police may be “to protect and serve,” but you and I both know what they are protecting and whom they are serving. It's not only in Miami that the police are a paramilitary organization protecting the interests of those in power. As Christian Parenti told me years ago: “We need to always remember that while the police do everything from getting kittens out of trees and enhancing public safety to killing strikers and framing radicals, the social control function has always been at the heart of what they do, even though most of what they do is not that.”

I replied, "A couple of years ago I got burgled, and the first thing I did was call the cops."

Christian said, "Most of us would do that. But the fact remains that it's an important distinction to see, that while most of what the police do is mundane sort of pseudo public safety functions, the heart of what they do, the most important social function, is to intervene at times of political crisis against rebels and to prevent such rebellion, too."

I just today received an email from a friend about this: "Whether a campaign is waged through violence or nonviolence, the oppressors are going to respond the moment the uprising gets serious. I'm going to name names: white middle class Americans have their heads in the sand about this. The powerful will react to protect their power and since they're allowed to use violence, they will. Nonviolent demonstrators will get shot. Arrestees will be threatened and tortured in jail. If anyone out there is serious about building a resistance movement, they are going to have to face what they're potentially risking: life and limb. The resisters' nonviolence does not in any way preclude the oppressor's use of violence. Quite the opposite, really. Because the more serious the opposition, the more serious the powerful's response. Whether we choose violence or nonviolence, it is *resistance* that challenges power, and that power will protect itself. Plenty of peaceful protesters have been killed in all kinds of struggles. To borrow another well-used Audre Lorde-ism: 'Your pacifism will not protect you.'" Because the state is based on violence anyway, the best we can hope for, really, is that this violence isn't aimed at us.

I think for many people, pacifism comes from having been pacified. I mean this in the sense if the U.S. military "pacifying," to use its terms, villages by blowing them up and terrorizing residents into submission, and I mean it in the sense of giving a child a pacifier, a phony tit that shuts her up by providing artificial comfort; by getting her to attach herself to something she pretends is a source of life but that in reality gives her no nourishment at all.

We should for once be honest with ourselves that a great many of

us in the center of civilization reap overwhelming material rewards in exchange for our compliance (which means in exchange for our dignity, humanity, animality, and any hint of moral high ground). Our cars, stereos, closets full of clothes, computers, vacations in Cancun or Acapulco are all giant pacifiers we eagerly place into our mouths and on which we greedily suck. But no matter how we suck, we never get what we need. And then we wonder why we are so (spiritually) hungry.

It's all carrots and sticks. Or rather plastic pacifiers in the shape of carrots and sticks. So long as we keep that plastic nipple (or is it a metal bit? I'm never quite sure) firmly between our teeth, so long as we keep sucking and sucking at nothing at all, and in so doing consume the entire world, gaining nothing of the nourishment from our landbase that would be our birthright to receive and our landbase's birthright to give (and receive in turn), those in power- the abusers, the exploiters- need not too often use the stick. But spit out the pacifier- spit out the bit- and they'll show you the stick. Ball up your fists and they'll raise it. Hit them hard, and they'll make you wish you'd never been born.

It's pretty effective, effective enough to cause us to stand by while the entire world is murdered.

If I didn't have to worry about going to prison, not a dam would stand anywhere I could reach.

I'm not sure, however, that I want to acknowledge that my compliance has been bought so cheaply as it has, for a bunch of cheap plastic consumables, perhaps my own thirty pieces of silvered plastic; (temporary) approval from those at the top of the pyramid; and then granting me the boon of not torturing or killing me. I don't want to acknowledge that fear- even very real fear- is the primary reason I'm failing to adequately protect those I so loudly proclaim I love. I don't at all like what that says about me.

I think that others, too, might not like what it says about them. Thus all the highfalutin but ultimately nonsensical moral arguments for pacifism. Thus the stridency with which many dogmatic

pacifists disallow mention of violence, or dismiss it with absurdities: "Violence, schmience." A response by a pacifist to Helen Woodson provides a great example of that insane stridency. One of her "crimes" was to walk into a bank with a starter's pistol, tell everyone she was not going to hurt them, demand cash from the tellers, and burn \$25,000 while delivering a statement on the evils of money. Now, check out the response by one pacifist online: "1. I'm curious how folks feel about this? When I heard about it, I was pretty shocked. First of all, that's a lot of \$ to burn! Second, I don't necessarily think \$ per se is the ROOT of all evil, whatever evil is (as you define it). And last, but not least, I believe it is a violent act to hold folks at gunpoint (even if it's a toy pistol) to make a point. There's got to be a better way. Now, if Helen Woodson wanted primarily to be locked up (which sounds apparent, anyway) she certainly achieved her mission. But why involve innocent bank tellers and customers? (I'm curious... does anyone know the name/location of the bank?) 2. I found the report quite disturbing and was puzzled about it being in this [pacifist] conference. What she did must have been terrifying for the people in the bank. If this is nonviolence, let me off the boat."

This response reveals many of the reasons why I have so little respect for so many pacifists. If we leave saving the world up to people like this, there will be nothing left.

I think a central reason for their stridency has to do with the old Jack and Jill discussion we had from R.D. Laing. It does no good for Jack to forget that his refusal to take down those in power is based on his fear of the violence he has seen them do to others, if Jill keeps reminding him of it. He must make her forget as well, and make her feel morally inferior to boot.

This is not the legacy I wish to leave. I do not want to have to look into the eyes of those humans one hundred years from now- or look into the eyes of the salmon now, or any other wild beings in this beautiful world being destroyed, or the animals in the industrialized hell of factory farms or laboratories- and say, "I did not do what was necessary because I was too afraid." I do not want that.

God- land, universe, muse, spirit, whomever- grant me strength, and more courage than I have.

* * *

I'm also not sure this is an argument against violence anyway, so much as it is an argument against getting caught. Which is an argument for being really smart.

And believe it or not, the odds are on our side. Study after study has shown that nearly all crimes go unpunished. Jessica Mitford, in her book *The American Prison Business*, writes, "The President's Commission on Causes and Prevention of Violence says that for an estimated nine million crimes committed in the United States in a recent year [this was forty years ago, but the statistics still generally hold], only 1 percent of the perpetrators were imprisoned. Carl Rauh, advisor to the deputy attorney of Washington, D.C., describes the process: 'Of 100 major crimes [felonies], 50 are reported to the police. For fifty incidents reported, 12 people are arrested. Of the 12 arrested, 6 are convicted of anything- not necessarily the offense reported. Of the 6 who are convicted, 1.5 go to prison or jail.'" I think we would have to adjust the 1.5 number up a little bit, to account for the fact that selective law enforcement officers and the courts nearly always select laws to enforce that have to do with violence or sabotage going up the hierarchy and ignore laws that have to do with violence going down the hierarchy (witness the Humboldt County Sheriffs Department going to great lengths to take out tree-sitters and ignoring both environmental degradation and rape). But then we'd have to adjust it back down a bit to account for crimes in which the perpetrator is obvious as well as those committed with no planning by people who are drug- or alcohol-impaired (recall my student at the prison who was never caught robbing drug dealers, but who got caught stealing a car: I could tell you dozens of those stories, and my students could tell you far more). When you take the obvious, the foolish, and the damn unlucky into account, I'm not sure exactly who else is getting popped.

One of the most striking implications of this is that those in power

must rely on us to police ourselves. No matter how they try, they cannot be everywhere at once, unless they can get inside the hearts and minds of each and every one of us and convince us to do their work for them. This is one of the ways that many pacifists are powerful allies to those at the top of the hierarchy: it's not only scary, they say, but immoral to fight back. Whom does this position serve?

Near the end of our book *Welcome to the Machine: Science, Surveillance, and the Culture of Control*, George Draffan and I wrote, “A high-ranking security chief from South Africa's apartheid regime later told an interviewer what had been his greatest fear about the rebel group African National Congress (ANC). He had not so much feared the ANC's acts of sabotage and violence- even when these were costly to the rulers- as he had feared that the ANC would convince too many of the oppressed majority of Africans to disregard 'law and order.' Even the most powerful and highly trained 'security forces' in the world would not, he said, have been able to stem that threat.”

We continued, “As soon as we come to see that the edicts of those in power are no more than the edicts of those in power, that they carry no inherent moral or ethical weight, we become the free human beings we were born to be, capable of saying *yes* and capable of saying *no*.”

This is what those at the top of the hierarchy fear more than anything else in the world.

* * *

There is no direct relationship between laws and morality. Some laws are moral, and some laws are immoral.

Let's return to the questions I asked earlier: To whom will you be called upon to answer? By whom do you *wish* to be called upon to answer?

There is a difference between being called upon to answer, and being punished. This is a difference too many activists and others

forget. When Plowshares activists bang on a missile then wait to get arrested- or as Philip Berrigan put it in the interview I quoted earlier in this book, “And you take the heat. You stand by and wait for the arrest”- they are forgetting that there is no moral reason to “take the heat,” to “wait for the arrest.” In fact doing so reinforces the mistaken and dangerous belief that governments have legitimacy beyond their capacity to impose punishment. It reinforces the mistaken and dangerous belief that the government is not a government of occupation. It reinforces the mistaken and dangerous belief that one should be responsible to- answerable to- the government, and not to one's landbase.

* * *

The next argument thrown out by pacifists is that because the state has more capacity to inflict violence than we do, we can never win using that tactic, and so must never use it. But if we can never use a tactic the state has more capacity to use than we do, we might as well hang it up right now. The state has more capacity to propagate discourse than we do: this logic would suggest we can never win using discourse, so we must never use it. The state has more capacity to raise funds and to use money than we do, which means we can never use fundraising either. We can say this for every possible tactic, except perhaps the tactic of sending pink bubbles of pure sweet love toward our enemies- oh, sorry, toward those wonderful souls who happen to be wounded in ways that are causing them to become CEOs, politicians, and police. We have the monopoly on this one.

The argument is just not true anyway. The United States had several orders of magnitude greater capacity to kill than the Vietnamese, yet the Vietnamese drove out the United States. I think often of Ho Chi Minh's famous line: “For every one of yours we kill, you will kill ten of ours. But in the end it is you who will grow tired.” Now, you could argue that at this remove the Vietnamese may have won the war, but McDonald's and Nike have won the ensuing “peace,” but we could say the same about the decolonization of India, that Gandhi may have won his peaceful revolution- which could not have happened, by the way, had Britain not already been bled white by World War II, nor without armed

revolutionaries also fighting for freedom- but that Monsanto and Coca-Cola have won the “peace” that followed.

What I said a few hundred pages ago- the fact that those in power can always outspend us does not mean that we should never attempt to use money for good- applies here as well. Here is what I said, altered to fit the present subject: “But we must never forget that if we attempt to economically, rhetorically, or physically/violently go head-to-head with those who are destroying the planet, we will always be at a severe, systematic, inescapable, and functional disadvantage. Me not buying an airline ticket won't do squat. Me writing one book won't do squat. Me blowing one bridge won't do squat. But all is not lost. The questions, yet again. Where are the fulcrums? How do we magnify our power?”

Pacifism, Part IV

The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion (to which few members of other civilizations were converted) but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence. Westerners often forget this fact, non-Westerners never do.

-Samuel Huntington

The final argument I've heard from pacifists is that violence never accomplishes anything. This argument, even more than any of the others, reveals how completely, desperately, and arrogantly out of touch many dogmatic pacifists are with physical, emotional, and spiritual reality.

If violence accomplishes nothing, how do these people believe the civilized conquered North and South America and Africa, and before these Europe, and before that the Middle East, and since then the rest of the world? The indigenous did not and do not hand over their land because they recognize they're faced with “a high stage of social and cultural development.” The land was (and is) seized and the people living there were (and are) slaughtered, terrorized, beaten into submission. The tens of millions of Africans killed in the slave trade would be surprised to learn their slavery was not the result of widespread violence. The same is true for the

millions of women burned as witches in Europe. The same is true for billions of passenger pigeons slaughtered to serve this economic system. The millions of prisoners stuck in gulags here in the U.S. and elsewhere would be astounded to discover that they can walk away anytime they want, that they are not in fact held there by force.

Do the pacifists who say this really believe that people all across the world hand over their resources to the wealthy because they enjoy being impoverished, enjoy seeing their lands and their lives stolen- sorry, I guess under this formula they're not stolen but received gracefully as gifts- by those they evidently must perceive as more deserving? Do they believe women submit to rape just for the hell of it, and not because of the use or threat of violence?

One reason violence is used so often by those in power is because it works. It works dreadfully well.

And it can work for liberation as well as subjugation. To say that violence never accomplishes anything not only degrades the suffering of those harmed by violence but it also devalues the triumphs of those who have fought their way out of abusive or exploitative situations. Abused women or children have killed their abusers, and become free of his abuse. (Of course, often then the same selective law enforcement agencies and courts that failed to stop the original abuse now step in to imprison those who sent violence the wrong way up the hierarchy.) And there have been many indigenous and other armed struggles for liberation that have succeeded for shorter or longer periods.

In order to maintain their fantasies, dogmatic pacifists must ignore the harmful and helpful efficacy of violence. Years ago I was asked by a publisher to review a book-length manuscript they had just received from a household-name pacifist activist. The document was a mess, and they said they might want me to help edit it. I was younger then, and far less assertive, so my comments were fairly minor throughout, until I came to a statement that made me curse and hurl my pen across the room, then get up and stalk outside for a long walk. The activist claimed that the American movement

against the war in Vietnam was a triumph for the pacifist resistance, and that it showed that if enough people were just dedicated enough to nonviolence they could bring about liberation in all parts of the globe. He mentioned the four dead at Kent State as martyrs to this nonviolent campaign, and also mentioned, "our unfortunate soldiers who lost their lives fighting for this unjust cause," but never once mentioned the millions of Vietnamese who outfought, outdied, and outlasted the invaders. My point is not to disparage or ignore the importance of nonviolent protests in the United States and elsewhere, but rather to point out what the pacifist pointedly ignored: the antiwar movement didn't stop the U.S. invasion- it *helped* stop the invasion. The primary work- and primary suffering- was done by the Vietnamese.

Oddly enough, the publisher didn't hire me to edit it.

I am just being honest when I say that I have talked to hundreds of people who are ready to bring the war home. I've talked to those who went down to help the Zapatistas but were told, "If you really want to help, go home and start the same thing there." I've talked to family farmers, prisoners, gang members, environmentalists, animal rights activists, hackers, former members of the military who have had their fill of their own enslavement and the destruction of all they love, and who are ready at long last to begin to fight back. I have spoken to Indians who have said their people are ready to bring back out ceremonial war clubs they have now kept buried or hidden for so long. I have spoken to students and other men and women in their teens, twenties, thirties, forties, fifties, sixties, seventies, eighties who know the world is being killed, and are ready to fight and to kill and if necessary to die to stop this destruction, who, like me, are not willing to stand by while the world is destroyed.

I give a talk. Afterwards someone asks me, "How do we hold CEOs accountable for their actions?"

I look hard at this person, but before I can piece together my answer, I hear a voice from the back of the room, "A bullet to the brain does wonders."

I don't say anything. I am surprised, I have to admit, at the number of people I see nodding solemnly. At least half.

The person again shouts out, "What other accountability is there?"

Finally I speak, "There is no legal accountability: when was the last time you saw a CEO put in prison for murder (or for anything, really)? When was the last time you saw a war criminal who won put in prison? Can you say *Henry Kissinger*? Put in the name of your favorite politician. And there is no moral accountability. A lot of these jokers think they're going to heaven. They all have their claims to virtue, and many of them probably believe them. And there is no communal accountability. There people are, like Hitler, admired. What's left?"

The same person shouts out, "Flesh. They're mortal. They die as surely as do the people they've killed."

It's a big hall, and it's dark in the back. I can't see who it is. It doesn't matter. Many people have expressed these same thoughts to me, only in private. I cannot tell you how many times I have thought them myself, only once again in private.

Someone else calls out, "But they'll just get replaced."

And a third person, "Take them out, too. And the next and the next. Eventually they'll get the message."

I feel certain this is what Tecumseh would have done.

The second person again, "Violence never acts as a deterrent."

A sharp laugh from the back and someone says, "Ted Bundy."

"What?"

"The state's violence deterred him from killing again."

“He didn't have to be killed.”

“He was kept in prison by force.”

A woman in the front says, “And the violence of men against women is a huge deterrent. Why do you think I don't walk alone at night? I have been deterred by violence. Don't tell me violence is not a deterrent.”

“Why do you think it is,” someone else chimes in, “that we don't all rise up right now to overthrow this horrid system? We're afraid of getting killed or sent to prison. Violence works great as a deterrent. It's just we don't use it.”

“Someone show me,” I said, “a peaceful way we can make those in power stop killing the world, and I will be on board faster than you would think possible. But I just don't see it. I just don't see it.”

* * *

Ward Churchill puts it well: “There is not a petition campaign that you can construct that is going to cause the power and the status quo to dissipate. There is not a legal action you can take; you can't go into the court of the conquerer and have the conquerer announce the conquest to be illegitimate and to be repealed; you cannot vote in an alternative, you cannot hold a prayer vigil, you cannot burn the right kind of scented candle at the prayer vigil, you cannot have the right folk song, you cannot have the right fashion statement, you cannot adopt a different diet, build a better bike path. You have to say it squarely: the fact that this power, this force, this entity, this monstrosity called the State maintains itself by physical force, and can be countered only in terms that it itself dictates and therefore understands. That's a deep breath time; that's a real deep breath time.

“It will not be a painless process, but, hey, newsflash: it's not a process that is painless now. If you feel a relative absence of pain, that is testimony only to your position of privilege within the Statist structure. Those who are on the receiving end, whether they are in Iraq, the are in Palestine, they are in Haiti, they are in Native

American reserves inside the United States, whether they are in the migrant stream or the inner city, those who are 'othered' and of color in particular but poor people more generally, know the difference between the painlessness of acquiescence on the one hand and the painfulness of maintaining the existing order on the other. Ultimately, there is no alternative that has found itself in reform; there is only an alternative that founds itself- not in that fanciful word of revolution- but in the devolution, that is to say the dismantlement of Empire from the inside out.”

* * *

I'm really angry that I had to spend the last couple of months deconstructing pacifist arguments that don't make any sense anyway. I'm angry that I've had to spend the last three years writing this book to show conclusions that should be pretty damn obvious. Newsflash: Civilization is killing the planet. (I've often heard that pattern recognition is one sign of intelligence. Let's see if we can spot this pattern in less than six thousand years. When you think of the landscape of Iraq, where civilization began, do you normally think of cedar forests so thick sunlight never reaches the ground? That's how it was prior to civilization. How about the Arabian peninsula? Do you think of oak savannah? That's how it was prior to civilization. When you think of Lebanon, do you think of cedars? At least they have one on their flag. Prior to the arrival of civilization, it was heavily forested, as were Greece, Italy, North Africa, France, Britain, Ireland. How long will it take you to see this pattern? How long will it take you to do something about it?) Newsflash: Civilization is based on violence. Newsflash: The system is psychopathological. Newsflash: This entire culture requires our disconnection from each other and especially from our landbases. Newsflash: This entire culture inculcates us into irresponsibility and would not survive were we to gain even a shred of responsibility.

I just received an email from a friend: “There are so many people who fear making decisions and taking responsibility. Kids are trained and adults are encouraged not to make decisions and take responsibility. Or more accurately they are trained to engage only in false choices. Whenever I think about the culture and all the horrors it perpetuates and we allow, and whenever I consider out

typical response to being faced with difficult choices, it seems clear to me that everything in this culture leads us to 'choose' rigid, controlled, unresponsive 'responses' over fluidity, real choice, and personal responsibility for and to those choices. Every time. Every single time.

"Pacifism is but one example of this. Pacifism is of course less multifaceted in its denial and delusions than some aspects of this culture (in other words, more obvious in its stupidity), but it's all part of the same thing: control and denial of relationship and responsibility on one hand versus making choices and taking responsibility in particular circumstances on the other. A pacifist eliminates choice and responsibility by labeling great swaths of possibility off-limits for action and even for discussion. 'See how pure I am making no wrong choices?' they can say, while in reality facing no choices at all. And of course they actually are making choices. Choosing inaction- or ineffective action- in the face of exploitation or abuse is about as impure an action as anyone can conceptualize. But these ineffective actions can provide the illusion of effectiveness: no matter what else can be said about pacifism, even with the gigantic problems we face, pacifism and other responses that do not threaten the larger concentration camp status quo are certainly achievable. That's something I guess. But it all reminds me of those who go to therapists to create the illusion that they're doing something, rather than the few who actually work to face their fears and patterns and take an active role in transformation.

"Pacifism is a toxic mimic of love, isn't it? Because it actually has nothing to do with loving another. Could it be said that toxic mimics are toxic in part because they ignore responsibility; they ignore relationship, they ignore presence, they substitute control for fluidity and choice? Toxic mimics are of course products and causes of insanity. Could it be said that a lack of responsibility, relationship, and presence, and the substitution of control for fluidity and choice are causes and products of insanity?"

Fewer Than Jesus Had Apostles

It could be that, in the future, people will look back on the American Empire, the economic empire and the military empire, and say, "They didn't realize that they were building their whole empire on a fragile base. They had changed that base from brick and mortar to bits and bytes, and they never fortified it. Therefore, some enemy some day was able to come around and knock the whole empire over." That's the fear.

- Richard Clarke, head of the President's Critical Infrastructure Advisory Board

Quite a while ago I had one of the most positive conversations I've ever had. It makes me think it really could be possible to speed up the process of bringing down civilization.

I talked with some hackers. I hope you'll forgive me if I don't tell you when or where we spoke, or the oddly satisfying circumstance under which we met. I also won't say their names or genders. Nor will I describe them. Presume they're men. Presume one of them looks like your bench partner from your high school advanced laboratory class, and the other looks strangely familiar, too, like someone you saw once in the far corner of a library, surrounded by books on Nestor Makhno, Emiliano Zapata, August Spies, and Albert Parsons. Or maybe he looks like someone you saw standing at the very back of an auditorium as he listened to someone speak passionately about the necessity of taking down civilization *now*.

In any case, here I am sitting across a table (or at least you can presume I'm sitting across a table) from these folks, sharing a pitcher of water at a café. Let's presume we're in Asheville, North Carolina, and it's late, very late, on a hot summer night.

"Let's start small," I say. "Would it be possible to inflict serious economic damage on a major corporation by hacking into computer systems?"

"You're presuming," responds the first one, let's call him Brian, "that this doesn't happen already."

The other, let's call him Dean, nods. I look back and forth between the two.

Brian continues, "It's in the corporations' best interests to not let on that this stuff happens all the time."

"Why is that?" I ask.

"You think they want people to know how easy it is to hack into a system?"

He winks, then pauses for effect. "And it's getting easier all the time. Take the use of wireless technologies that have come on strong these past few years. See that thermostat over there?"

He points to the far side of the room. I turn to look, then turn back when I hear him start talking again.

He says, "Those are oftentimes computerized, and send and receive signals through the air from a main system. The other day I hacked into the main computer of a major corporation through the thermostat."

My jaw drops.

He throws his head back and laughs, then says, "I didn't do anything. I was just trying to see if I could do it."

"But could you have done damage?"

"Oh, yes."

"How?"

"Name a nasty corporation," he says.

"Ha!" says Dean, "name one that isn't."

"Freeport McMoRan is pretty nasty."

They both shake their heads.

"Most polluting company in the United States. Pollutes all over the world. Machine guns natives in West Papua. Imprisons others in shipping crates."

Dean looks at me intently before asking, "How does it make its money?"

"Mainly mining. Gold in Indonesia, sulfur in the Gulf of Mexico. Other minerals, too."

"Okay," Dean says. "Piece of cake."

"What do you do?" I ask. "Mess with their bank accounts, pretend it's *Fight Club* and destroy their credit card accounts?"

Brian wrinkles his nose.

Dean says, "Shipping. All the shipping these days is computerized."

Brian interrupts to ask, "Did you know the U.S. economy almost ground to a halt last year?"

"What?" I exclaim.

"The dockworkers strike on the West Coast," Dean says. "The big companies couldn't get out their raw materials and parts. They were within a day or two of running out. Do you know what happens then?"

It's clear the question is rhetorical.

He asks another question, "Do you know how much it would cost GM to shut down its assembly line?"

"I have no idea."

"Millions of dollars per minute."

"Jesus," I say.

"No," Brian responds. "Dockworkers."

"Or," Dean says, "Hackers. Let's say Freeport McMoRan ships through Singapore. Singapore is the most automated port in the world. What happens if you reroute canister after canister headed for New Orleans instead to Honduras, Belize, Turkey?"

"The people who work for those companies," Brian adds, "rely more on computers than common sense. They have to. The companies are so big, the movements of people and resources so complicated, that people can't keep track of it all. Last month I hacked into the security system of a major corporation and had the computer issue me an ID card. I went to the company headquarters, swiped my new ID card, and it okayed me to enter. I walked over to the security people and told them I was a hacker who had just breached their security. They refused to believe me. They said the computer okayed me, so I should just quit joking and head on in."

"They believed the computer over their own ears."

"I tried to persuade them, but nothing I said convinced them to listen to me."

"Do you think," I ask, "that hackers could do more than just mess with a big corporation or two?"

Brian smiles, "You're presuming, again, that nobody is already doing this."

"No," I say. "Do you think they could bring it all down, could take down civilization?"

Brian nods, and so does Dean. Dean says, "I've spent the past twenty years studying *how* the economic *system* works. I don't mean economic theory, although I certainly understand that. But

rather the nuts and bolts of it. Transport of raw materials like we're talking about with those canisters. And the thing that amazes me is that the system hasn't already collapsed. It's incredibly fragile. And incredibly vulnerable."

As Dean talks, Brian pulls what looks like a walkie-talkie from a holster on his belt. The walkie-talkie has a small LED screen. Suddenly the machine squawks, and a light turns green.

"Guess what," Brian says. "Somebody in Asheville is receiving a page." He pulls a hand calculator from another holster, and punches a few buttons. He shows me the screen. I read information about the page. He smiles, proudly, then says, "I made a few minor modifications..."

I ask, "Why do you do this?"

"It makes me giddy to figure things out. I love the rush when I suddenly understand something new."

I know the feeling. I feel what I'd imagine is the same rush whenever I suddenly *get* the relationship, for example, between pornography and science.

I ask, "If you love computers, would you take down civilization?"

Dean says, "Yes."

Brian says, "In a heartbeat."

"Why?"

"Do you know where they put computer books in bookstores?" Brian asks. "In the business section."

"And?"

"Computers were supposed to set us free. That was the rhetoric. That's always the rhetoric. But they've just been used to further

enslave us, to further enslave the poor, to further enslave the planet.”

I become aware of the silence in the room. I take a sip of water.

Brian continues, “Let’s say you have soldering iron that you love to use. You love soldering pieces of metal together. You love burning beautiful designs into pieces of wood furniture. Now, what would you do if somebody started using the soldering iron to torture people? I can’t speak for you or anyone else, but I would pull the plug on the iron. I’d do that,” he repeats, “in a heartbeat.”

A soft sound breaks the silence in the café. Across the room the lone employee has begun stacking chairs on tables.

Brian says, “I’m in love with figuring out how things work. And the existence or nonexistence of machines doesn’t mean we can’t figure things out. If I smash this calculator, that doesn’t invalidate Ohm’s Law. Ohm’s Law is still there. Nature is still there, under all this concrete, under all these machines. And have you gone outside during a blackout? The lights are still there; they’re up in the sky. And it’s so quiet you can finally start to hear.”

I ask again, “And you would be willing to help bring it down?”

The woman is stacking chairs closer. We don’t have much time.

They both laugh and say, “Of course.”

“You’ve thought about this a lot?”

Again, both laugh and say, “Of course.”

I have to know. “If they were dedicated enough, and knew what they were doing, how many people do you think it would take to bring down civilization?”

Brian says, “It would take far fewer than Jesus had Apostles.”

Get There First With the Most

The art of war is simple enough. Find out where your enemy is. Get at him as soon as you can. Strike at him as hard as you can, and keep moving on.

-Ulysses S. Grant

How do you win? Someone once asked the Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest how he won so many battles. His response summed up the essence of military strategy in six words: “Get there first with the most.”

Let’s break it down. *Get there.*

You choose where you fight. The person or force who chooses the battlefield has a better chance of winning. Indeed, much military strategy consists of attempting to get your enemy to attack you where you’re strong and not to attack you where you’re weak, while simultaneously probing for your enemy’s weak spots to attack. This is true on battlefields, it is true in antagonistic discourse, it is true in all areas of conflict.

The Battle of Fredericksburg during the Civil War is a great example. Confederate general Robert E. Lee had the army of Northern Virginia entrenched behind a stone wall, up a hill, behind a river. Federal general Ambrose Burnside sent his Army of the Potomac across the river and into a series of frontal assaults up the hill. His troops were slaughtered. On hearing this news a few days later, another Confederate general, Joseph E. Johnston, commented peevishly, “What luck some people have. Nobody will ever come to attack me in such a place.” And that, once again, is what you want. You want your enemy to attack you where you are strong, and to not attack you where you are weak. You want insofar as possible to control *where* and *over what* you fight- the *terms* and *terrain* of the battle.

The same is true of discourse. We are all familiar with the infamous line from the attorney, “When did you stop beating your wife?” The field of battle has shifted from *whether* to *when*. A few years ago I wrote about an exemplary case: a representative of the

capitalist press was moderating a “debate” between two capitalists running to head the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. His first question: “Do you think environmental regulations work, or do they go too far?” Notice how he framed the field of battle, what he included and excluded by his framing. A similar thing happened a few pages ago with the article about the woman in Iraq who was shot for working as a translator for the U.S. military. Calling her “innocent” puts us on one discourse battlefield, and calling her a “collaborator” puts us on a whole different one. The same is true in discussions on pacifism. This is one reason pacifists so often try to claim the “moral high ground,” military language if I’ve ever heard any. Allowing them that moral high ground gives them an advantage similar to allowing soldiers to shoot at you from above. Shifting the field of discourse such that what they claimed was moral high ground is now a plain or valley or swamp, or shifting discussions of efficacy, or as in the case with this book, shifting the field of discourse to one of being present to one’s circumstance and valuing context and relationship over abstractions causes the battles to be fought over entirely different terrain. Examples of this framing or reframing of fields of discourse are countless. Tonight I heard the capitalist media (how different does the terrain of discourse look if we call it the “mainstream media,” or “the news?”) call U.S. soldiers (how different does this terrain look if we call them “servicemen” or “servicewomen” on one hand, or “mercenaries” or “invaders” on the other?) “America’s best.” How does that frame all that comes after? Tonight I did not hear in the capitalist media any mention of biodiversity. How does *that* frame further discourse? Look around. Pay attention to the way you shape discourse, sometimes accidentally, sometimes manipulatively, sometimes perforce, most of the time entirely unconsciously, by choosing what will and won’t be spoken, what terms will and won’t be used. And pay attention to the way your discourse is shaped for you.

This is a central reason we have to tell lies to each other, and especially to ourselves. If Bill Clinton and the timber industry can frame the debate over deforestation as “jobs versus owls,” the deforesters have already won before we start. If they can frame the debate such that people believe forests need to be cut down so they

won’t be killed by beetles, they’ve already won. If George W. Bush and the timber industry can frame the debate over deforestation such that people believe forests need to be cut down to keep them from burning, they’ve already won. If abusers can keep you talking about anything and everything except their abuse and how you’re going to stop them, they’ve already won.

If those in power can frame the “debate” over the murder of the planet into the question of how to implement “sustainable development” (look how they’ve already framed it by calling industrialization “development”) they’ve already won: we are fighting over techniques to salvage civilization, not ways to save the planet. Worse, those in power routinely frame battles of discourse over whether or not damage is even being done. And even as those we love are dying of cancer, we let them do this. The discourse should be: how do we stop these psychopaths from continuing to kill those we love?

All of this is why I’ve been hammering so hard on the notion of questioning premises. Not questioning someone’s premises (including mine) amounts to ceding the choice of battlefield to whomever chooses these premises. It’s like Burnside throwing his troops again and again against Lee’s entrenchments. You’re going to get slaughtered. Actually it’s worse, since at least Burnside *saw* the stone wall, yet so often in our discussions the premises remain partially or entirely hidden.

This analysis applies not just to big armies, and not just to discourse, but to all conflict. It certainly applies to stopping civilization from killing the planet. Right now, what are the battlefields on which we are encouraged- allowed- to fight? We are encouraged to vote. But of course we all know the old Wobbly saying: If voting made a difference it would be illegal. And in any case, our choices of whom/what we can vote for are strictly limited. No matter whether a Republican or Democrat wins, we lose. We are encouraged- allowed- to use the courts, and while of course we may get the occasional win there, we must never forget by and for whom the courts are set up. We must never forget that their authority ultimately comes from the ability of the state to inflict

violence. We are encouraged- allowed- to write, so long as we never mention social change and violence in the same paragraph. We are encouraged to recycle, shop green (so long as we shop!), and so on.

Much more interesting are the fields we are not encouraged- allowed- to choose for our battles. Who chooses for us? What fields are off limits, and why? Who has declared them off-limits? Why have we ceded this territory?

What do we want? How will we accomplish it? I return to the salmon (you can of course return instead to what you love). As I already mentioned, for salmon to survive, dams, industrial logging, industrial fishing, industrial agriculture must go, the oceans must survive, and global warming must cease. Choose one of these, say, dams. What would we need to do to remove dams? (And notice the difference in implication even between using the verb “would” and “do,” as in “What would we need to do to remove dams?” *Would* implies theory, which means we're not really going to do it, while *do* implies reality; the choice has been made, and now we're asking how.) What battlefields do we choose?

Here's the point: if you allow your enemy to choose the battlefield, you will probably lose. Choosing the field upon which you will fight is the first step to winning. Chose your battlefields wisely.

* * *

“Get there first with the most.”

Next: *first*.

It's generally easier to defend that attack. Defending, you can hunker down in a protected place and wait for your enemy to come to you. Attacking, you have to expose yourself in terrain known to the defender. The defender can use both static and dynamic weapons while the attacker can only use the latter. If you get there first, you can claim the best defensive position. Then you can entrench that position. You can attempt to force your enemy to either remove you from this entrenched position or quit the battle. You can also do nothing. The latter option is not available to your

enemy, unless your enemy is willing to accept the status quo. In other words, getting there first *forces* your enemy to either accept your position or to do something about it. This gives you a powerful advantage. Once again, all of this applies on every level of conflict.

To take the example of Fredericksburg, Lee got there first, and was able to take strong positions and make them stronger. Had Burnside gotten there first, his troops could have sauntered up the hill instead of dying at its base. But because the Confederates were able to get there first they were able to stand and calmly fire from behind a wall while the Federals had to cross open ground.

Once you've claimed some battlefield- and this is true in all areas of conflict- you can hold it until you abandon it or are dislodged. That is the primary reason I devoted a couple of months to the discussion of pacifism and a few years to this discussion of taking down civilization. Within this culture pacifism has in many circles been able to claim the moral high ground, having presumably found it empty after its previous holders- those who defended themselves and those they loved- had their landbases, cultures, bodies, and souls destroyed by the relentless physical, rhetorical, and spiritual attacks of the civilized. Whether or not pacifism *deserves* the moral high ground, the fact is that within the great swaths of this culture it holds it, just as the civilized hold most of the physical ground of the world, and for similar reasons. Pacifism as moral high ground has become the default, the position we are taught to accept, the position we *do* accept, without thinking. It will remain the default until it is made or shown to be untenable. That was one purpose of my analysis: to attempt to shake the strength of pacifism's hold on that ground. It's the same with my larger scale analyses. The positions we accept as defaults don't need to be proven, don't need to be defended, don't even have to make sense as long as no attacks are made on them. Civilization is a high state of social and cultural development. Industrialization equals development. High technology is good for humans. Civilization is separate from and more important than any landbase. Power is more important than relationship. The world is organized hierarchically, with (rich, white, civilized, male) humans at the top.

It is just and moral and *right* (based ultimately on might) for those at the top of this artificial hierarchy to exploit those perceived as below. Nonhumans do not speak. Part of what I've been attempting to do with all my work is to dislodge these assumptions from their positions.

As I listen, then feel, then think, then write, then rewrite, I try to always remain aware of the phrase *getting there first*. I try to come up with every reasonable- and even possible- counterargument and get there first: meet it before it occurs to readers.

Get there first. I want to tell you a story. When I was a high jump coach, before every track meet I made my jumpers get to the stadium before anyone else. They were the first to put down their athletic bags near the approach. They were the first to tape their mark. For overnight trips sometimes I'd take them to the field the night before, as soon as we'd get into town. A couple of times we climbed fences to get to where the high jump competition would be held. Even for away meets- *especially* for away meets- I wanted them to claim the high jump pit. It was now theirs, and it was up to the other jumpers to take it away from them.

I think we now need to do a similar thing. We need to claim the land where we live. We need to fall into it, to treat it as though it's ours- as in a family we love and protect, not as in something we have the right to trash- and we need to defend it. If someone is going to destroy our landbase, they'll have to come through us to do it, because we were here first.

It's no wonder we don't defend the land where we live. We don't live here. We live in television programs and movies and books and with celebrities and in heaven and by rules and laws and abstractions created by people far away and we live anywhere and everywhere except in our particular bodies on this particular land at this particular moment in these particular circumstances. We don't even know where we live. Before we do anything, we have to get here first.

One of the things I've always hated about being an environmental

activist is that nearly all of our work is defensive, as we try to stop this or that area from being destroyed. That's necessary work, of course, but it's not enough. We need to begin to beat back the civilized, to reclaim land and let it recover. In addition to the purely defensive work of stopping new roads from being busted into native forests, we need to rip out roads that are already there, whether or not we have the permission of those in power. We need to take out dams. We need to turn croplands back into forest, marsh, and meadow.

The good news is that this is all pretty easy. It takes an extraordinary amount of work and energy to impede succession, and for many places all we need to do is force the civilized off the ground they've stolen and the landscape will do the rest. Bust a dam, and the river will take care of itself. Take out a parking lot, and it won't be long till paradise comes back home.

The bad news is that we live in occupied territory, and those in power will try to maintain that occupation to the very bitter end. This is another sense in which getting there first is critical to bringing down civilization. Since those who are exploiting and killing your landbase will not without a fight relinquish their perceived entitlement to exploit and destroy, any threat to their perceived entitlement is fraught with danger. If they catch you. So do not let them. How do you not let them? By getting there first. Know what you are doing, and know where you are doing it. Practice until you can perform your tasks in your sleep. Know the terrain. Have escape routes. Plan for contingencies. Plan for even more.

Get there first. Just as I do when I write, prepare for every possible response to your actions. The state *will* respond. You need to get to each response first and close off that avenue of attack. The state, for example, uses informants. So don't tell anyone what you're going to do, or what you've done. I mean anyone, including your new girlfriend who happens to be the daughter of the deputy sheriff, including your old friend whose new girlfriend happens to be good friends with someone whose mother goes to church with someone whose cousin believes that while dams need to come

down some of those environmentalists just go too far and need to be turned over to the police before they hurt someone. I mean anyone. Emails are traceable. Don't send emails, especially traceable ones. Forensics labs can pick up shoeprints. Cover your shoes, and then throw away your shoes and covers. Burn them. Burn all evidence, and then make the ashes disappear. Anticipate every response. No matter what you do, get there first.

* * *

“Get there first with the most.”

Next: *With the most.*

When it comes to winning battles, local superiority means almost everything. It doesn't matter who has the most troops all over the world: the important thing is who has the most troops right here right now. The United States can have more than 1.4 million soldiers in 135 different countries, and it can have about a million cops just in this country, but if there are four of you and none of them standing next to a cell phone tower, you have achieved local superiority. You got there first with the most, and you will probably win this particular battle. If the four of you show up and find you have not achieved local superiority, don't fight right here right now.

If Nathan Bedford Forrest encapsulated most military strategy into six words, baseball Hall of Famer Wee Willy Keeler accidentally distilled most guerrilla strategy into only five. Someone asked him what was the secret of his batting success, and he responded, “Hit 'em where they ain't.”

Until those in power find ways to put surveillance microchips into each and every one of us- something they're feverishly working toward, by the way- they will not be able to be everywhere. This means that so long as we do not identify with them, so long as we have driven them from our hearts and minds, so long as we identify with our own human bodies and the land where we live, we will be able to hit 'em where they ain't.

Their security often stinks. We have been so long and so deeply pacified that for the most part we don't strike back, which means for the most part they do not have to defend the lands they're seized, nor even much that could very easily be attacked.

Hitting 'em where they ain't is not the only way to win. But I don't believe our movement is large enough yet to allow us the luxury of pitched battles, which generally favor the larger army.

There is a sense in which for the foreseeable future we will never have the most. This is a problem everyone who has ever tried to stop civilization has faced. It was a constant complaint of the Native Americans. The Sauk Keokuk, who was highly esteemed by the whites for his conciliatory attitudes, argued that to fight back was tantamount to suicide, saying, “Few, indeed, are our people who do not mourn the death of some near and loved one at the hand of the Long Guns [pioneers], who are becoming very numerous. Their cabins are as plenty as the trees in the forest, and their soldiers are springing up like grass on the prairies. They have the talking thunder [cannon], which carries death a long way off, with long guns and short ones, ammunition and provisions in abundance, with powerful warhorses for their soldiers to ride. In a contest where our numbers are so unequal to theirs we must ultimately fail.” Keokuk's warlike rival Makataimeshiekiakiak (Black Hawk) spoke of the civilized in similar terms after he was defeated: “Brothers, your houses are as numerous as the leaves on the trees, and your young warriors, like the sands upon the shore of the big lake which rolls before us.” Recall the words of the Santee Sioux Taoyateduta (Little Crow), who also spoke against fighting back: “See!- the white men are like locusts when they fly so thick that the whole sky is a snow-storm. You may kill one- two- ten; yes, as many as the leaves in the forest yonder, and their brothers will not miss them. Kill one-two- ten, and ten times ten will come to kill you. Count your fingers all day long and white men with guns in their hands will come faster than you can count... Yes, they fight among themselves, but if you strike at them they will all turn on you and devour you and your women and little children just as the locusts in their time fall on the trees and devour all the leaves in one day.” The Wyandot Between the Logs, who also was a friend of

the whites (specifically the Americans) dropped the metaphorical language and put it bluntly: "I am directed by my American father to inform you that if you reject the advice given you, he will march here with a large army, and if he should find any of the red people opposing him in his passage through this country, he will trample them under his feet. You cannot stand before him... Let me tell you, if you should defeat the American army this time, you have not done. Another will come on, and if you defeat that, still another will appear that you cannot withstand; one that will come like the waves of the great water, and overwhelm you, and sweep you from the face of the earth."

It's important to note that the Native Americans who cautioned against fighting still lost their land.

Each of these declarations by each of these Native Americans is in some ways a restatement of Thomas Jefferson's line, with subject and object inverted: "In war they will kill some of us; we shall destroy all of them." I do not know any environmentalist or other type of activist who has not experienced the despair that comes from facing civilization's juggernaut of destruction.

Civilization has from the beginning devoted itself almost completely to conquest, to war. It's sometimes hard to say- and I'm not sure I care anyway- whether the civilized hyperexploit resources to fuel the war machine, or need a war machine to seize resources (which are then hyperexploited to fuel the war machine). It's probably a bit like asking whether the dominant culture is so destructive because most of its members are insane, suffering from a form of complex PTSD; or whether the dominant culture is so destructive because its materialistic system of social rewards- overvaluing the acquisition of wealth and power and undervaluing relationship- leads inevitably to hatred and atrocity; or whether the physical resource requirements of cities necessitate widespread violence and destruction. The answer is yes.

The point as it relates to the current discussion is that just as there are functional and systematic reasons we will never be able to outspend civilization, there are functional and systematic reasons

we'll never be able to outgun them. *In a pitched battle*. But there are other ways to fight.

Hit 'em where they ain't.

* * *

I just finished reading an account of Osceola, a Seminole Native American who fought against white theft of Seminole land. Having seen the difficulty of defeating the war machine in open contest, Osceola, according to this account, "had no intention of opposing the white men's armies in force. Instead, he conveyed the women and children to a safe place deep in the swamps and organized his warriors into small parties instructed to buzz about the whites like so many elusive bees, killing where they could and retreating into the safety of the swamps at the slightest evidence of superior force."

It sounds like a pretty good idea.

Hit 'em where they ain't.